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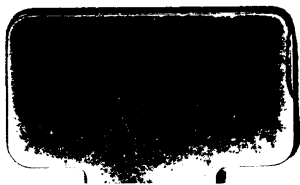
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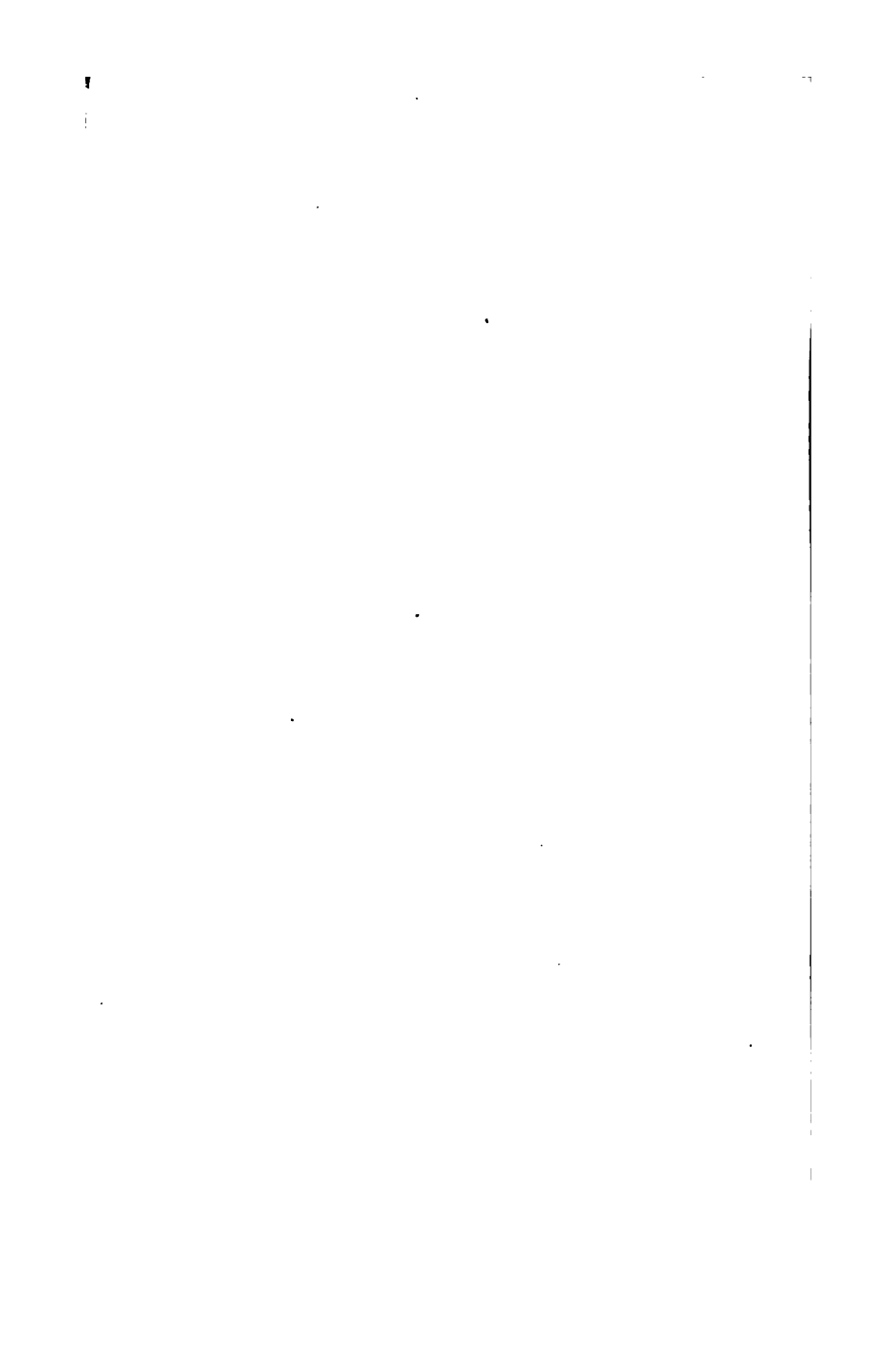
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SCRIPTURE CHARACTERS:

FIRST SERIES.

WHATSOEVER THINGS WERE WRITTEN AFORETIME, WERE WRITTEN
FOR OUR LEARNING, THAT WE THROUGH PATIENCE AND COMFORT
OF THE SCRIPTURES MIGHT HAVE HOPE.

ROMANS xv. 4.

SCRIPTURE CHARACTERS:

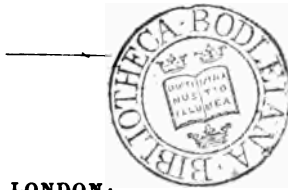
FIRST SERIES:

ADAM TO ABRAHAM.

B. C. 4004—1822.

BY THE REV. WILLIAM JOWETT, M.A.

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PREFACE.

THE following Pages contain so much of Scripture History, as is necessary to exhibit the principal Characteristics of the Persons, whose life is here delineated. The main purpose of Revelation is kept in view throughout; namely, to display the dealings of God with mankind generally, and with his Church in particular. Divine Providence, governing all human affairs; and Divine Grace, ordering the steps of the children of God; these are the doctrines to be discerned in every part of the Sacred Records: and these the Author aims to illustrate in the present Work.

To the Divine Blessing he humbly commends this attempt to unfold some of the most deeply interesting passages of Holy Writ; the study of which will be alike profitable to Rich and Poor. These things "were written for our admonition." "May the God of hope fill us with all joy and peace in believing, that we may abound in hope, through the power of the Holy Ghost!"

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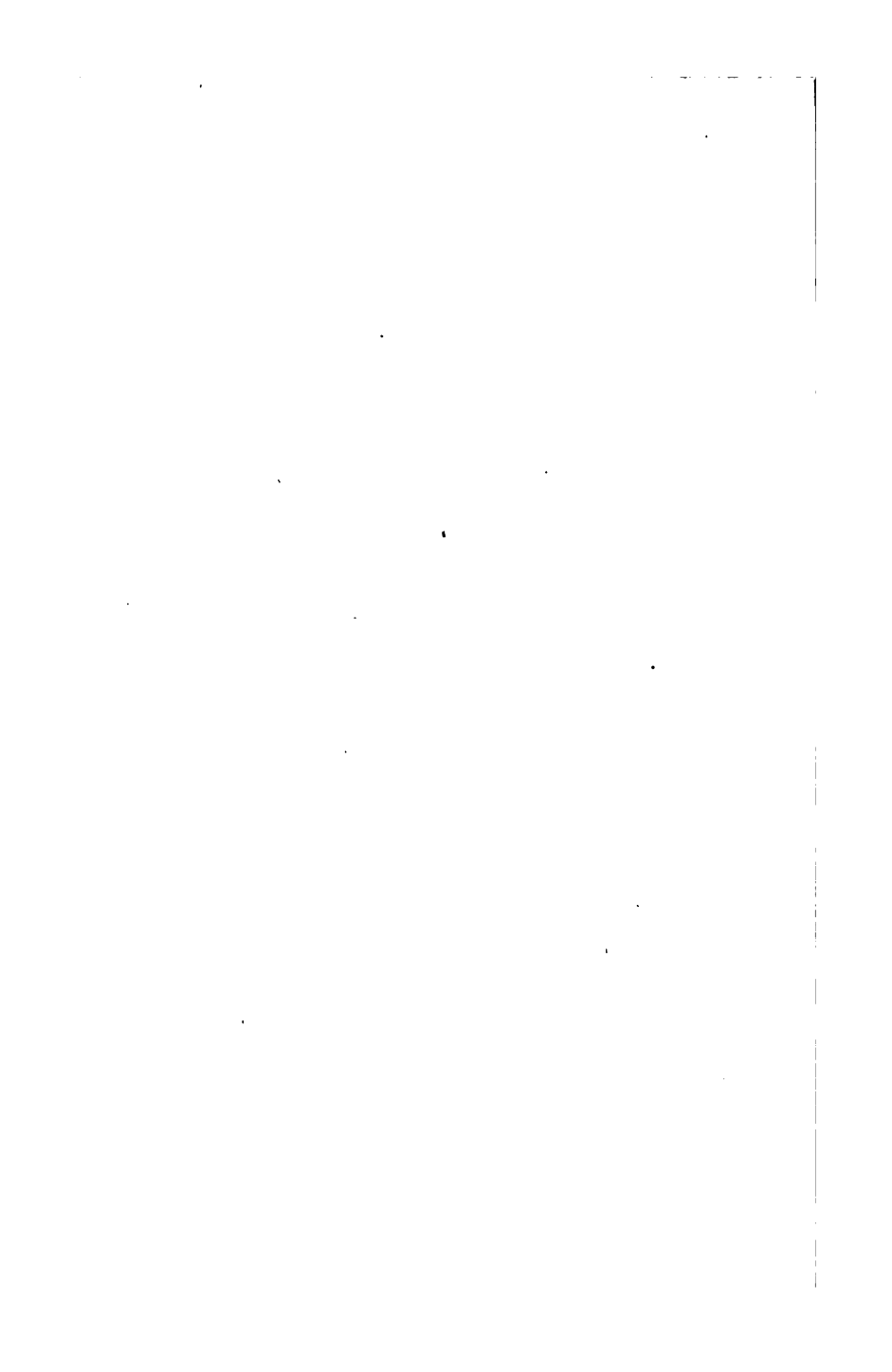
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SCRIPTURE CHARACTERS.

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CHARACTER OF ADAM.



SECTION I.

ADAM IN INNOCENCY.

In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth.

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And God said, Let us make man in our image, after our likeness : and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth.

So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him ; male and female created he them.

And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it : and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth.

(*Genesis* i. 1. and 26—28.)

THE account of the Creation of the heaven and the earth, is given with a majestic simplicity in the opening verses of the Bible. The first five verses describe the work which Almighty God was pleased to perform on the first day. No reason is assigned why the operations of our Great Creator were divided into successive portions : nor does it become us to pry into his secret councils in this matter. We



receive the narrative, as given by inspiration of God; and thankfully adore his wisdom, power and goodness.

On the sixth day we read that the Almighty created the noblest of his works on earth: he made Man, after his own image. This is the subject of our present contemplation.

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To understand the holy and happy character of Adam in Paradise, is a matter of some difficulty. By nature we are so sinful and ignorant, that we soon feel ourselves at a loss, when endeavouring to contemplate a created being, living in a state of perfect innocence. The Bible, however, supplies us with various helps for this purpose. Let us then pray to be enlightened by God's Holy Spirit; that we may be taught whatever it is right for us to know, upon this interesting subject.

We observe, then, that the excellence and felicity of our first Parents consisted in their holiness, their communion with God, and their freedom from all evil.

1. First, they were perfect in *Holiness*. "God made man upright." He created man "in his own image, after his own likeness." The chief character of that image is holiness. "The Lord our God is holy." When he commands us to imitate him, he does so in these words—"Be ye holy; for I am holy." This then was the chief excellence of Adam in Paradise.

And what is holiness? In few words we answer—It is, to have the heart filled with the knowledge of what is good, and with dispositions tending only to what is good. It is to will what is good, to do what is good, and to delight supremely in all that is good. St. John teaches us what it is to bear the image of God, when he says, "God is love; and he that dwelleth in love, dwelleth in God, and God in him." (1 John iv. 16.) Adam enjoyed a perfect knowledge of the will of God; and he had a heart entirely disposed to love and obey that will.

2. Hence, his happiness mainly consisted in *Communion* with God. With the inmost thoughts of his mind he conversed with his Maker; and he felt every movement of his soul to be directed by the pure and holy Spirit of his God. When our first Parents fell into sin, they lost this delightful intercourse with the Most High. Instead of welcoming his approach, they fled from him: "They heard the voice of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day; and they hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God amongst the trees of the garden." (Gen. iii. 8.) From what they lost, we may infer what was the character of their former happiness. Their Great Friend was now become their enemy: but O how glorious and blissful must that former friendship have been!

3. The felicity of Paradise consisted, also, in that entire *Freedom* from pain, trouble, sorrow and death, which was enjoyed by Adam and Eve, so long as they remained sinless. In their proper original

character, they were the happy lords of creation. They had "dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creepeth upon the face of the earth." Every herb and every tree yielded them fruit. Work was not wearisome : sickness and death were unknown : the Tree of life grew in the midst of the garden, as a pledge to them, that, so long as they continued obedient, they should be immortal.

Such was then the character and the condition of Adam. He was holy : God was his Friend, before whose presence he walked in joy unutterable : and all created things around him were "very good!"

It has already been remarked that we necessarily have great difficulty in apprehending this state. To assist us, however, in conceiving of it, two very material helps are furnished us in the Scriptures.

First, we may gain some insight into Man's original innocency, by studying that new character, to which believers in Christ attain upon their conversion to God. They are said to be "renewed in the image of God." That image in which they are renewed, accords with the image wherein Adam was at the first created.

Another method there is of contemplating this subject ; namely, by studying the character of Christ. Though no one of the human family ever was perfect, yet in our Lord Jesus Christ, who became Man, and who is called "the second Adam," we behold spotless perfection. Adam in innocency

must have resembled what Christ was in the flesh. In reading the Gospels, we become acquainted with the character of him, whose name is, Emmanuel, God with us: and in this way we form some idea of the excellence and bliss of Adam and Eve, when they dwelt in Eden.

Faint, after all, as may be our conceptions of this glorious state, yet it is useful to contemplate it in all its particulars, that we may see how deeply we are fallen by sin, and how great is the grace of our Redeemer, who came to save and to restore us.

SECTION II.

ADAM FALLING INTO SIN.

Now the serpent was more subtil than any beast of the field which the Lord God had made. And he said unto the woman, Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden?

And the woman said unto the serpent, We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden:

But of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die.

And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die:

For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil.

And when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make one wise, she took of the fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat.

And the eyes of them both were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together, and made themselves aprons.

And they heard the voice of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day : and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God amongst the trees of the garden. (Genesis iii. 1—8.)

WE have contemplated Adam in innocency: the mournful reverse is now to be considered.

Perhaps some might ask, How could it possibly happen, that holy beings, such as Adam and Eve were, should ever admit even a thought of sin? We must confess ourselves unable to answer the question: all that we can reply, is—They *did* fall into sin. It is clear that they were open to temptation, and that the tempter knew this. Satan, who assumed the form of a serpent, took advantage of their exposed state, and plied his temptations with so much subtilty, that Eve first, then Adam, fell into transgression. The steps by which they sinned are, alas! too easily understood by us: seeing that we ourselves are constantly prone to fall after the same manner, and into similar transgressions.

Let us examine, then, each part of this affecting narrative. It is set before us as a glass, wherein to discern our own sinful nature, that we may be made humble and penitent!

1. The leading fault of Eve was, her *Listening* to the words of the Tempter, and venturing to parley with him. He drew her into conversation about the forbidden fruit: he began by throwing out suspicious hints concerning that God, who had placed them in Eden, and laid them under a certain prohibition. On hearing such insinuations, Eve ought to have

at once perceived that the serpent was an enemy of her God; and she ought consequently to have ceased conversing with him. Instead of which she allows the intercourse to continue, giving answers of a very unsatisfactory nature, and stating the law of God in terms different from those in which the Lord himself had given it.—On this fact we may ground the general observation, that it is dangerous to admit any suggestion from Satan into our minds: and if ever any evil thought is injected by the tempter, our best defence against it, is—The pure word of God: not inventions or alterations of our own; but the simple word of God, just as it stands in the Bible.

2. Next, see how Satan presses his advantage. His first step was artful: his second, daring. He flatly gives the lie to God, and introduces into Eve's bosom the spirit of *Unbelief*. "The serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die."—There is no falsehood which Satan more desires to instil into our hearts, than, that God will never fulfil his threatenings.—And sinners no less eagerly embrace the lie, that there is no such place as hell, no such thing as everlasting punishment. In a word, they believe Satan, rather than God.

3. But, that Eve may not be shocked on hearing her Creator thus "made a liar," Satan immediately works on her *Ambitious curiosity*. He tells her how much she loses by not eating of the fruit of that particular tree, and how much she would gain by tasting it. "Ye shall be as gods;" that is, ye

shall know something which God himself has kept from you: ye shall have your eyes opened to discern good and evil! The thought of all this wonderful change puffed up her imagination. Eve, now becoming vain, began to think there must be something great in this flattering language. Discontentment with her present limited knowledge would now steal upon her mind.—So easy is it for us to pant after something, we know not what: and to pine with dissatisfaction, till we get that imagined something.

4. And now the poison begins to work. Her *Wandering Eye*, gazing upon the forbidden tree, completed Satan's temptation, and Eve's ruin.—Oh, when shall we learn to govern the eye, that quick inlet to sin? When shall we be convinced, that things "pleasant to the eye," are frequently fatal to the soul? When shall we be so truly wise, as willingly to remain ignorant of many things, which it is not our proper business to know? Will not Eve's bitter experience forewarn us?—How many have been beguiled by alluring objects, or by proud speculations to their eternal perdition! Oh that we were wise unto that which is good, and simple concerning evil!

5. Eve next ventures on the *Commission* of the sin to which she was tempted. She takes of the fruit of the tree, and eats. She breaks through the only restraint, which a wise and holy God had laid upon her and her husband. She sins: and she is first in the transgression!

6. Not content with this, she now becomes the *Tempter of her husband*. "She gave unto her husband with her, and he did eat." She does Satan's work. Adam complies: whether induced by the same false reasons, we know not. In his case there was one motive more, to overcome him; namely, the solicitation of his wife. But in yielding to this, he only increased his own sin: for he showed that he valued her affection more than God's favour. It was his duty to resist her solicitation.

Nothing ought more to pain our hearts than Sin! Every thing connected with it, is awful and affecting! In this true history of the beginning of sin we behold the arch-murderer and liar, triumphant: our gracious God, insulted: two previously-innocent persons, self-destroyed: and their vast family of millions of descendants, plunged into guilt and misery! O let us be covered with shame and confusion of face, to think how deep we have fallen; and let our earnest cries ascend to heaven, for the redemption of our lost souls!

SECTION III.

OUR FIRST PARENTS CONVICTED AND SENTENCED.

And the Lord God called unto Adam, and said unto him, Where art thou?

And he said, I heard thy voice in the garden, and I was afraid, because I was naked; and I hid myself.

And he said, Who told thee that thou wast naked? Hast thou eaten of the tree, whereof I commanded thee that thou shouldest not eat?

And the man said, The woman whom thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat.

And the Lord God said unto the woman, What is this that thou hast done? And the woman said, The serpent beguiled me, and I did eat.

And the Lord God said unto the serpent, Because thou hast done this, thou art cursed above all cattle, and above every beast of the field; upon thy belly shalt thou go, and dust shalt thou eat all the days of thy life:

And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel.

Unto the woman he said, I will greatly multiply thy sorrow and thy conception; in sorrow thou shalt bring forth children; and thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee.

And unto Adam he said, Because thou hast hearkened unto the voice of thy wife, and hast eaten of the tree, of which I commanded thee, saying, Thou shalt not eat of it: cursed is the ground for thy sake: in sorrow shalt thou eat of it all the days of thy life;

Thorns also and thistles shall it bring forth to thee; and thou shalt eat the herb of the field;

In the sweat of thy face shalt thou eat bread, till thou return unto the ground; for out of it wast thou taken: for dust thou art, and unto dust shalt thou return.

And Adam called his wife's name Eve; because she was the mother of all living.

Unto Adam also and to his wife did the Lord God make coats of skins, and clothed them.

And the Lord God said, Behold, the man is become as one of us, to know good and evil: and now, lest he put forth his hand, and take also of the tree of life, and eat, and live for ever:

Therefore the Lord God sent him forth from the garden of Eden, to till the ground from whence he was taken.

So he drove out the man; and he placed at the east of the garden of Eden Cherubims, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life.

(*Genesis* iii. 9—24.)

OUR first father, Adam, is to be viewed, not merely as a private, but also as a public character. He stood at the head of the human race. Through his sin, millions have inherited an evil nature, and a tremendous curse. "In Adam all die:" "All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God."

Such is fallen man's condition! We found it hard to rise to the contemplation of our first parents' pure and happy state in Paradise: but we can have no difficulty in understanding the dispositions and conduct of Adam and Eve after their transgression. The temper of mind then exhibited by them, we have ourselves experienced times without number.

Let us consider—What they felt, on having transgressed the divine law: How they conducted themselves, when called to account by God: The sentence passed upon them: and, The mercy offered to them.

1. The dejection of our first parents after their sin, was of the same kind with what we experience when we have done something which we know to be exceedingly wrong. We all have a conscience: that conscience is the voice of God speaking within our hearts: and unless our heart has become hardened by repeated offences, the first feelings of a sinner, even of a little child, are those of shame, and fear and remorse. A child cannot hold up its head, when guilty: shame covers its face: it fears to meet an angry master, or an offended father: it is deeply sorry, and wishes the fault had not been committed: above all, it endeavours to keep out of the way of

reproof and punishment. This is the simplest way to conceive of Adam's state of mind, when he felt that he had broken God's command. Children are without disguise: they are too young to practise much deception; they show their feelings at once. So did our first parents.

Would not the thought flash upon their consciences—"How reasonable the conditions which were placed upon us; how easy the test of our obedience! All the trees freely offered for our use but one! And this small prohibition we could not endure; but for the sake of a little momentary indulgence forfeited duty, happiness, and the favour of our gracious God!"—Such is every sinner's remorse, when he comes to a right sense of his wretched, undone condition!

2. Next observe, how they conducted themselves, when called to account by God. The Lord said unto Adam, "Where art thou?" He called our trembling parents out of their hiding-place. "Hast thou eaten of the tree, whereof I commanded thee, that thou shouldest not eat?" He touches conscience to the quick. Eve does not escape: the question put to her, is, "What is this that thou hast done?" Now, in their answers we may remark that they tell the truth—they could scarce help it: but it is in such a way, as shows unwillingness to take that blame to themselves which they deserved. Adam throws the charge on his wife, and, in some measure, upon God himself: "The woman, whom thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and

I did eat." The woman throws the blame on the cunning of the serpent: "The serpent beguiled me, and I did eat."—Does not this transaction forcibly remind us of our own inclination to seek for excuses; to shift the guilt on others; and to make out the best case we possibly can for ourselves? Instead of pleading from the heart, "Guilty," what devices have we for lulling conscience! Who can say that he honestly and entirely condemns 'himself in the sight of the heart-searching God!

3. As to the judgment passed on our first parents, and through them on all mankind, it hath constantly been fulfilled; and it will never cease fulfilling, to the end of time. Not to speak of the curse pronounced on the serpent, (although it is very remarkable and very awful,) let us look to our own sentence. It may be summed up in few words. Hard labour: many bodily sufferings, and other humiliations: our earth, subjected to a perpetual curse: and death, closing our state of trial here below;—these are the melancholy terms of our sentence! This is our lot. None escape this curse. Men may try, as they will, to make this world a happy dwelling-place: sooner or later the mistake is discovered. It may be compared to a prison-house, where each man occupies a condemned cell; and all in their turn are led out to execution.

There was moreover, in part, an immediate execution of judgment on our first parents; and this in a way, which must have been deeply wounding to their feelings. They were banished forthwith from

their beloved Eden. They were restrained from taking of the tree of life; a tree, which appears to have stood in Paradise as a kind of sacramental pledge, that so long as they continued innocent, they should be immortal. "So he drove out the man; and he placed at the east of the garden of Eden Cherubims, and a flaming sword which turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life." No more did they enjoy uninterrupted vigour and health. Infirmary and decay began to work upon their bodily frame. Had it even been possible for them to approach the tree of life, there was the point of the flaming sword turning every way to remind them, "Eden is forfeited, and ye must surely die!"

4. But what was the mercy offered to our unhappy parents?—If in this hour of their conviction and condemnation, God had not spoken kindly to them, they must have been utterly consumed with terrors. The Lord, however, graciously gave them the promise of a Redeemer. The seed of the woman,—that is, the Lord Jesus Christ in human nature,—was to come and destroy the power of "that old serpent, the devil." Mysteriously as the prophecy was worded, yet it served to shed a ray of hope over the future. The slightest word of encouragement often cheers the downcast heart. Thus, then, would this sure word of promise from the living and true God encourage Adam and his wife! It was the "hope of eternal life, which God, who cannot lie, promised before the world began;"

which in due time he revealed first to our fallen parents in Paradise, making it afterwards still clearer and clearer in succeeding ages. Without this hope, they must have sunk deeper and deeper: from dependency into outer darkness; from death temporal into death eternal; from a world of woe, into that abyss, "where their worm dieth not, and the fire is not quenched!"

Sacrifices were, no doubt, at this time instituted; the Lord having ordained them to preserve in man's memory the grand doctrine, that "without shedding of blood is no remission:" (Heb. ix. 22.) The skins of the animals thus slain, God directed our parents to use for clothing. And thus, sheltered outwardly from shame, and inwardly from despair, they would commence the dreary work of earning their subsistence from an accursed ground.



SECTION IV.

ADAM IN HIS FAMILY :—CHARACTERS OF CAIN AND ABEL.

And Adam knew Eve his wife; and she conceived, and bare Cain, and said, I have gotten a man from the Lord.

And she again bare his brother Abel. And Abel was a keeper of sheep, but Cain was a tiller of the ground.

And in process of time it came to pass, that Cain brought of the fruit of the ground an offering unto the Lord.

And Abel, he also brought of the firstlings of his flock and of the fat thereof. And the Lord had respect unto Abel and to his offering;

But unto Cain and to his offering he had not respect. And Cain was very wroth, and his countenance fell.

And the Lord said unto Cain, Why art thou wroth? and why is thy countenance fallen?

If thou doest well, shalt thou not be accepted? and if thou doest not well, sin lieth at the door. And unto thee shall be his desire, and thou shalt rule over him.

And Cain talked with Abel his brother: and it came to pass, when they were in the field, that Cain rose up against Abel his brother, and slew him.

And the Lord said unto Cain, Where is Abel thy brother? And he said, I know not: Am I my brother's keeper?

And he said, What hast thou done? the voice of thy brother's blood crieth unto me from the ground.

And now art thou cursed from the earth, which hath opened her mouth to receive thy brother's blood from thy hand;

When thou tillest the ground, it shall not henceforth yield unto thee her strength; a fugitive and a vagabond shalt thou be in the earth.

And Cain said unto the Lord, My punishment is greater than I can bear.

Behold, thou hast driven me out this day from the face of the earth; and from thy face shall I be hid; and I shall be a fugitive and a vagabond in the earth; and it shall come to pass, that every one that findeth me shall slay me.

And the Lord said unto him, Therefore whosoever slayeth Cain, vengeance shall be taken on him sevenfold. And the Lord set a mark upon Cain, lest any finding him should kill him.

And Cain went out from the presence of the Lord, and dwelt in the land of Nod, on the east of Eden. (*Genesis* iv. 1—16.)

THE condition of Adam and Eve in their early family-circumstances, is briefly, yet minutely made known to us in the Holy Scriptures. When driven out of Paradise, they literally had "the world to begin." With hands to labour, and with God to instruct them how to labour, (*Isaiah* xxviii. 23—29.) their business was, to cultivate the ground: neces-

sity compelled them. They were clad, for decency's sake, with the skins of animals; which animals had been slain, as already mentioned, for the purpose of offering sacrifices to God. These sacrifices were a type of that Great Sacrifice, which was to be made in due season by Jesus Christ, the Son of God, for the sins of the whole world. Such, in few words, was their condition, both temporally and spiritually contemplated.

After a time, a son was born to Adam and Eve; the first-born of the human race. Eve now passed through the great pain and peril of child-birth: she also experienced the joy of a mother, on seeing her beloved offspring born into the world. She seems to have been impressed with a notion that this was the Promised Seed, who should destroy the serpent: for she exclaims, "I have gotten a man-child from the Lord;" or as some consider her to have intended, "I have gotten *The Man* from the Lord;" and some even suppose the words to have meant, "I have gotten the man Jehovah," that is, the God-man, Christ Jesus: "Emmanuel, God with us."

Whatever may have been the exact purport of her words, it is evident that she exulted in Cain's birth. The name she gave him, signifies, "A Gain or Acquisition."

In the Holy Scriptures, however, which describe the true state of Adam's family, and of Cain's character, we behold a very different picture from what Eve's imagination contemplated. By this history, we are enabled, in the very first instance of the

birth of a child, to see what is meant by the words, "Adam begat a son in his own likeness:" (words spoken afterwards on occasion of the birth of Seth, but equally applicable to every child of man.) Little did Eve at this moment suspect, that all her descendants would answer to the description given by David, "Behold, I was shapen in iniquity; and in sin did my mother conceive me." (Psalm li. 5.)

The character of Cain shows, moreover, the awful extent of Satan's influence, now that he had usurped the dominion of this world. St. John describes Cain as being "of that wicked one:" (1 John iii. 12.) that is, he was a child of the devil. Satan, who had tempted our first parents, was now permitted to enter into the heart of Cain, and dwell there.

We will briefly notice the chief features of the character of this wretched man.

1. His first and great sin, was *Presumption*. He chose his own method of worshipping God. The Lord had appointed sacrifices of animals, as the way of approaching him, in acceptable worship: for we must not suppose, that it was by accident that Abel chose the right way, or that Cain was uninstructed concerning that way. No doubt Adam had taught his sons, what he, in the first instance, had been taught of God. Cain, however, being a tiller of the ground, did nothing more than bring "of the fruit of the ground as an offering unto the Lord." He neglected, and very probably despised, the institution of sacrifices.

It is no uncommon error, even now, for persons

to regard thankfulness to God for his goodness, as the sum and substance of Religion. Their system excludes evangelical humility. They admit not the necessity of repentance; and are even offended at the idea of a broken and a contrite heart. The practice of sacrificing was designed to keep up a tender remembrance of sin, and to show the need of an atonement. But these doctrines are as distasteful now-a-days to many nominal Christians, as they were thousands of years ago to Cain.

When, however, we choose our own method of approaching God, instead of coming unto him through Christ, who is "the Way, and the Truth, and the Life," we offer the greatest possible affront to our holy Lord God, and are, consequently, sure to be rejected of him.

2. But Cain offended yet further. When rebuked by his Maker, he sunk into *Sullenness*. His spirit was moved with secret indignation against the Most High. "His countenance fell." This is the sure mark of a sullen mind, falling under the power of slow and settled anger. Neither would Cain in any way come to terms, although God condescended to reason with him.

What a spectacle is this! A moth contending with the Almighty! A sinner, a creature of a day, standing it out against the High and Holy One, who inhabiteth eternity!—It more than doubles our guilt, when we add obstinacy to rebellion.

3. Then followed that diabolical passion, *Hatred* of his brother Abel. "And wherefore hated he

him? Because his own works were evil, and his brother's righteous." His hatred was a compound of envy at his brother's superiority, and malignant dislike of piety itself. Not only did he hate Abel, but he hated Abel's God.

4. From this deep enmity, which he probably vented in open reviling of his pious brother, he proceeds to the act of *Murder*. Thus Cain treads in the steps of Satan.—Oh, what wretchedness is now to be seen in Adam's family? Death, in its most frightful form: the domestic circle deprived of its brightest ornament, righteous Abel: while the parents are horrified by the presence of their ferocious son, a man not fit to live! And what remorse for their own guilt must now have agitated the heart of our first parents!

5. Cain, in the next place, affects a sort of *Indifference*, and endeavours to brave justice; no uncommon practice with hardened offenders. In what mode the Lord appeared to him, or put the awful question, "Where is Abel thy brother?" we are not informed. But what can equal the daring impiety of Cain's reply: "I know not: am I my brother's keeper?"—How vain the attempt to hide any thing from God: and what miserable folly is it, to put any kind of cheat upon our own conscience! "Murder will out"—is a common saying. And so at last will every sin! "God shall bring every work into judgment, with every secret thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil."

6. And now sentence proceeds against the mur-

derer, and *Despair* takes possession of his heart. No sooner is judgment pronounced, than Cain becomes abject, terrified, and haunted with an evil conscience. What a life does he now begin to live, more frightful than ten thousand deaths such as Abel's! For wise reasons the Lord does not immediately destroy Cain; but prolongs his vagabond existence here, sending him to wander over the earth, with a mark set upon him. Thus good men would shudder at the sight of him: and all, even his enemies, would be restrained from molesting him. The blood-stained earth refused his culture; so he gives himself up to a course of reckless desperation. He abandons all family-religion, and the means of grace: (for that must be the meaning of the words, "*Cain went out from the presence of the Lord.*") He raises a posterity, builds a city, and leaves no further record, than that some of his descendants become ingenious artisans. What trifles are such matters, when we think of the wrath of God resting on the head of the murderer, and of the punishment awaiting him in a future state!

We will add two remarks of a general nature, resulting from this account of the commencement of Adam's family-relations.

First—May it not suggest to Parents the duty of exercising a godly fear in reference to their offspring? When tempted to doat upon a lovely child, they should remember, that none prove eternally blessed, but those whom God loves, and who are taught to love God. Let them not fondly ask,

“Lord, and what shall this child do?” For God does not reveal the future to us: and, upon the whole, it is a mercy that he does not. But this one thing parents may do, and ought to do; namely—Commend their children to the Lord in prayer! They should also seek special grace for themselves, to assist them in bringing up their offspring for God.

And then, on the other hand—Let children learn, from the story of wicked Cain, to guard against those common evils of the heart—anger, self-will, obstinacy, envy, and dislike of others. How fearful to think, that ill-natured bickerings, quarrels, and fightings, may possibly lead “to murder and to death!” Especially let the Young beware of ridiculing piety or pious persons. Headstrong children are often prone to excuse their own wilfulness, by pointing to the defects which they discern in brothers and sisters, or even in their parents. Faults will inevitably creep into the domestic circle: but there is no greater blessing, no surer safeguard to the rising generation, than Family-Religion.

SECTION V.

ADAM IN HIS FAMILY—ABEL'S CHARACTER.

And Abel, he also brought of the firstlings of his flock and of the fat thereof. And the Lord had respect unto Abel and to his offering. (Genesis iv. 4.)

THERE is a bright, as well as a dark side, in the family-picture of our first father Adam. We have

considered the character of his first-born, Cain, the murderer: let us now view the holy character of his second son, the murdered Abel: or, as he is styled in Scripture, "righteous Abel."

From his bearing this title, and from his possessing a character so widely different from Cain's, some might be ready to imagine that Abel was born with a nature superior to that of Cain. Such, however, is not the doctrine of Scripture. There we learn that all men, without exception, are conceived and born in sin. Cain and Abel both of them inherited a corrupt nature from their fallen parents. The difference in their characters arose from this—that Abel was changed by divine grace, Cain was not. Abel was transformed into the image of God: Cain remained under the power of his natural corruptions, and under the influence of the devil.

If we had only had the history contained in the book of Genesis, we might perhaps not so very clearly have seen this doctrine. But one part of Scripture helps to explain another. St. Paul, in his Epistle to the Hebrews (chap. xi. verse 4.), distinctly informs us, that Abel was righteous through his faith. And faith, we know, is the gift of God: believers are not born believers; they are made such by a new birth, through the power of the Holy Ghost. It was the Spirit of God that made Abel what he was.

And what he was, we may learn from the verse already referred to, and which shall be quoted at full length: "By faith Abel offered unto God a

more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts: and by it he being dead yet speaketh."

The right way, then, to study Abel's holy character, is, to observe how the divine principle of Faith wrought within him: and this we shall remark in the following particulars.

1. First, it was by faith that he received and obeyed the *Command* of God, in regard to his offering.—God had appointed sacrifices, not mere thank-offerings: Abel complied with this appointment. He was "a keeper of sheep;" and "he brought of the firstlings of his flock, and of the fat thereof."

The command relative to this mode of worshipping God, was most probably conveyed to Abel by his father Adam. Abel having thus received it, no new revelation from God was needed: but it did need the power of God to work in his heart a principle of obedient faith.

2. Secondly, he had faith to discern the *Intention* of the sacrifice. This firstling of the flock was a type of Jesus, the Lamb of God, slain from the foundation of the world. A Redeemer had been promised, who was in due time to be manifested in the flesh. Abel believed the promise; and by this sacrifice actually showed forth the Redeemer, almost four thousand years before Christ appeared on earth. Here was faith indeed!

3. Again, Abel's was a faith which led to his *Acceptance* with God. "The Lord had respect unto

Abel, and to his offering: but unto Cain and his offering he had not respect." In truth, Abel believed in Christ Jesus: and God never fails to accept and bless those, who come unto Him through Jesus the Mediator. St. Paul also says that Abel hereby "obtained witness that he was righteous:" that is, that he was a justified person. Happy Abel, greatly beloved and highly honoured of God! So shall every sinner be justified, and shall have peace with God, who comes simply believing on Christ, the sinner's Friend and Advocate. Jesus himself declares, "Him that cometh unto me, I will in no wise cast out."

5. We notice, further, that the faith of this righteous man, was an *Offence* to his ungodly, unbelieving brother. As Satan cannot endure the success of the cause of Christ, so neither can he bear that any of the children of men should be delivered from sin. He therefore stirs up all his power against those who follow Christ. Persecutors, like Cain, are his agents. Wicked men are instigated to persecute, because they hate the conversation, yea the very sight of holy and believing characters. They would, if possible, sweep all the saints of God from off the face of the earth. "Marvel not (said Jesus to his disciples) if the world hate you."

6. Once more—It is to be remarked, concerning Abel's faith and sacrifice, that it was a *Display of Gospel-Truth* to all ages. "By it he being dead yet speaketh." His life and death, short as the account is, may be viewed as an epitome of the whole

Gospel-dispensation. For—here we view the Spirit of the Lord manifestly working in Abel, as He did not in Cain. We behold also in Abel the work of faith with power : a faith, which led him to Christ, and consequently to acceptance with God ; a faith, which stood the fiery trial of persecution ; a faith, the end of which was, praise and honour and glory to God, and the salvation of Abel's own soul. Blessed martyr and witness to the truth of the everlasting Gospel ! How brightly doth the light of his Faith shine, undimmed by Time, in the earliest records of the Church of God !—Well-comforted also might his afflicted parents be ; while, turning from the frightful image of his death, they reflected that the brow of their beloved Abel was now encircled with an unfading crown of glory !

SECTION VI.

ADAM'S FAMILY IN THE LINE OF SETH.

This is the book of the generations of Adam. In the day that God created man, in the likeness of God made he him ;

Male and female created he them ; and blessed them, and called their name Adam, in the day when they were created.

And Adam lived an hundred and thirty years, and begat a son in his own likeness, after his image ; and called his name Seth :

And the days of Adam after he had begotten Seth were eight hundred years : and he begat sons and daughters :

And all the days that Adam lived were nine hundred and thirty years : and he died. (*Genesis* v. 1—5.)

THE lives of men were prolonged, before the flood, to such an amazing extent, that it was no unusual

thing for them to see their children to the sixth or seventh generation ; those children themselves also being aged. Thus, Adam's life reached to nine hundred and thirty years ; during the last two hundred and forty-three of which, he was contemporary with his descendant, Methuselah : who lived nine hundred and sixty-nine years, and died the year before the flood. Thus the ages of these two men, Adam and Methuselah, extended over nearly the whole space of time from the Creation of Man to the Flood. Adam might converse with Methuselah, and Methuselah with Noah : and Noah, the father of the new world, would thus be able to relate things which he had heard, at second hand only: He would tell what Methuselah had reported to him from the lips of Adam, concerning the Creation, the garden of Eden, the temptation of Eve by the serpent, the banishment of our first parents from Paradise, the death of Abel ; and many other points relative to the works of mankind in the old world.

Of the immediate children of Adam, only one more is named in Scripture. It is related that Eve bare him another son, and called his name Seth, (which means, "appointed:") "For God, said she, hath appointed me another seed instead of Abel, whom Cain slew." (Genesis iv. 25.)

The language of Eve is devout and touching. In giving this name to her third son, she records her grief for the loss of Abel, and her remembrance of the atrocious character of her first-born. And this

she does in a spirit of gratitude to God, united with a hope and anticipation, that Seth might inherit, not the place only, but also the piety of Abel.

In this instance, Eve was probably not disappointed of her desire; for what follows immediately, shows that an era of remarkable piety commenced in this line of the family. "And to Seth, to him also was born a son; and he called his name Enos: then began men to call upon the name of the Lord:" (Genesis iv. 26.)

Two different, but not opposing senses, have been given to this passage of Scripture:—one, that the public worship of Jehovah was at this time very generally established by the families of Seth and his son Enos: the other, that the party of worshippers thus formed in the world were called by some particular name.

1. As to the first sense of the words—What (we may ask) could be more natural, or more seasonable and necessary, than the establishment of public worship as extensively as possible at this period of the world? Cain and certain of his descendants had evidently broken away from the restraints of Religion. Their ungodliness would be very infectious: ungodliness always is so: "a little leaven leaveneth the whole lump:" "one sinner destroyeth much good." We might perhaps have imagined that Cain's influence would have been utterly destroyed; that his murderous character, and the mark set on him, would have made all men shun his society. But the fact was otherwise. He married, and had

a family: and since the earth no more yielded her increase to him, he and his descendants employed themselves in hewing stones from the quarry, and digging metals from the bowels of the earth. They became skilful in building, and forging, and even in making musical instruments. Meantime, irreligion and violence increased among mankind. We read of one of Cain's descendants, Lamech, talking very wildly (to say the least) on the subject of murder.—How needful then was it, under those circumstances, that Seth and his son should earnestly endeavour to set up a counter-influence!—In a world, where God is so greatly dishonoured, it is peculiarly incumbent on his servants to persuade as many of their friends as possible, openly to worship him, and avow their love for Religion. If others forsake God, so much the more let us cleave to Him. This course is our duty, our defence, and our glory.

2. Then, as to the other sense of these words—It seems very probable that some particular name should be given to these pious descendants of Seth. By a religious conduct, men are sure to bring down upon themselves the hatred, scorn, and persecution of the ungodly. It is well when their malice vents itself in nothing harsher than ill words. The early saints before the flood probably were called, "Men of Jehovah," or, The Lord's people: just as "the disciples of Christ were called Christians first at Antioch." Names more honourable than these there cannot be: yet it is not unlikely that these titles were uttered with profane contempt by the enemies

of God and of his saints. Things, names and persons the most precious and dignified, are the chosen jest of the scorner!

Thus from the very beginning Adam would behold in his own family two parties—the pious, and the profane. Scripture leaves us in almost total darkness, as to whether our first parents themselves truly repented and returned to God. Yet, from the continuance of piety in one line of Adam's descendants, and from the devout language adopted by Eve, we may admit at least a general impression, that both of them experimentally tasted the blessings of Redemption. If so, how painful must it have been to them to witness the increasing wickedness of mankind! After the birth of Seth, Adam lived eight centuries. Surely he must have frequently sighed out, "I would not live away!" Surely he must have welcomed death, in the hope of obtaining that new Paradise above, from which glorified saints shall never fall. His own and his family-history, however, is briefly summed up in the words—"And the days of Adam, after he had begotten Seth, were eight hundred years: and he begat sons and daughters: And all the days that Adam lived were nine hundred and thirty years: AND HE DIED." (Genesis v. 4, 5.)

CHARACTER OF ENOCH.



ENOCH WALKING WITH GOD.

And Enoch lived sixty and five years, and begat Methuselah :

And Enoch walked with God after he begat Methuselah three hundred years, and begat sons and daughters :

And all the days of Enoch were three hundred sixty and five years :

And Enoch walked with God : and he was not ; for God took him. (*Genesis* v. 21—24.)

AMONG all the patriarchs before the flood, there is no one so singularly celebrated for his piety, and for the favour of God towards him, as Enoch ; called by St. Jude, “the seventh from Adam.” Concerning most of the others, little else is stated than the dates of their birth and death. All lived to more than twice the age of Enoch : he, however, in what might then be accounted a short life, (namely, three hundred and sixty-five years,) attained to a higher character, and a nobler distinction than they all.

He is mentioned in three different parts of Scripture ; namely, in the book of Genesis, in the Epistle to the Hebrews, and in the Epistle of St. Jude. St. Paul (*Heb.* xi. 5.) attributes his eminent character to his faith. “By faith Enoch was translated that he should not see death ; and was not found, because God had translated him : for before his translation.

he had this testimony, that he pleased God :”—adding significantly, “ But without faith it is impossible to please God ; for he that cometh to God must believe that he is, and that he is a rewarder of them that diligently seek him :” (verse 6.)

To study this character, therefore, is (as in the case of Abel) to trace the pure and simple workings of faith. The life of Enoch, brief as the sacred narrative may be, abounds with evidences of the existence and operation of this living principle.

1. First, then, as to the *Ground* of his faith, let it be noticed that Enoch was contemporary with Adam rather more than three hundred years. He must therefore, in all probability, have enjoyed full opportunities of religious instruction from his aged ancestor. If it be inquired, consequently, on what his faith rested ; the reply is obvious—It rested on the testimony of God, as delivered to him by Adam, Seth, Enos, and others of that great religious body, which was gradually raised up in the midst of a wicked world. The revelation of God in those days was indeed but a small light ; yet it was sufficient to walk by, during that long night of increasing darkness. All the fathers before Christ, as St. Paul expresses it, “ received not the promise :” the promise, that is, of the Redeemer. He means, that this promise was not in their day accomplished. They “ received” *only* the promise, *not* its fulfilment. They knew, however, that a Redeemer would in due time appear : and they as truly trusted in him, as though he had been already come.

2. This faith of Enoch, moreover, was a *Realizing* faith. It had respect to the unseen but ever-present God. "He that cometh unto God, must believe that He is." By faith Enoch beheld Him who is invisible.—In no other way, but by faith, can we know God, during our sojourn here on earth.

3. Hence, moreover, Enoch acknowledged God as a *Reconciled* Father. He knew God to be "a rewarder of them that diligently seek him." This thought clearly arises from the declaration, that Enoch walked "WITH" God: that is, on terms of affectionate confidence and union with the Lord.

4. The faith of Enoch was a *Sanctifying* principle: it led to holiness: "for before his translation he had this testimony, that he pleased God." This could not be by a dead faith. Nothing more offends God, than for men to profess that they know him, while in works they deny him. "Faith which worketh by love," is the character pleasing to God. "Without holiness no man shall see the Lord."

5. The faith of Enoch was *Practical*: not theoretical. It diffused its influence, in his performance of all the relative duties of life. It is related (Gen. v. 22.), "And Enoch walked with God, after he begat Methuselah, three hundred years, and begat sons and daughters." He did not therefore live a solitary life of secret piety. He entered upon the varied engagements of the domestic circle: only, with a holy mind! It is scarcely probable that he would have been so distinguished, had he not made

it his aim to bring up his children "in the nurture and admonition of the Lord."

6. His faith was *Habitual*. This is apparent from the expression, He *walked*. His course of conduct on earth is described by a term no less emphatic than this: "Enoch WALKED with God, after he begat Methuselah, THREE HUNDRED YEARS." The constant, uniform tenor of his life, was marked by devotedness to the Lord's glory. He was led by the Spirit: he was filled with the Spirit: he walked in the Spirit!

7. His was a faith brightly *Influential* in dark times; and by it he powerfully rebuked an ungodly world. This we learn from the remarkable record given concerning him, under inspiration, by the Apostle Jude: who writes—"And Enoch also, the seventh from Adam, prophesied of these, saying, Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousand of his saints, to execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodly committed, and of all their hard speeches, which ungodly sinners have spoken against him." It is evident that impiety was rampant. Enoch therefore boldly proclaimed the coming of a Day of Judgment; in which the ungodly deeds and hard speeches of the wicked will meet a tremendous condemnation at the bar of their Almighty Judge. He announced, what sinners can least bear to be told, that *there is* a future judgment; that the Lord will come with ten thousand of his saints, (characters so utterly despised

here,) and will then consume all the ungodly of the earth like dross.—Enoch must have had many and bitter enemies on this account: but by faith he persevered in his testimony.

8. And the faith of this holy man was *Blissful* in its end. His honourable course was crowned with a quiet removal from this evil world. Something better, even than a triumphant death, was granted him: “He was not, for God took him:” “He was translated that he should not see death.” Whether friends or enemies sought him, he was no more to be found. Most probably, without pain or corruption, he was transported in an instant, body and soul, into the immediate presence of God: his bodily frame miraculously changed; his spirit perfected in glory.

From Enoch’s character we learn the blessedness of close communion with God, and the duty of separating ourselves from a sinful world. In faith, in spirituality, and in purity he is a bright pattern for our imitation. Our way of departure, it is true, will be different from that which he enjoyed. We shall pass through the valley of the shadow of death. Yet if, like him, we walk with God now, our eternal state will hereafter be the same. We too shall rise to glory: we shall dwell with our Redeemer: we shall have done with sinners, with sin and with mortality, for ever!



CHARACTER OF NOAH.



SECTION I.

NOAH BEFORE THE FLOOD.

But Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord.

These are the generations of Noah: Noah was a just man and perfect in his generations, and Noah walked with God.

And Noah begat three sons, Shem, Ham, and Japheth.

The earth also was corrupt before God, and the earth was filled with violence.

And God looked upon the earth, and, behold, it was corrupt; for all flesh had corrupted his way upon the earth.

And God said unto Noah, The end of all flesh is come before me; for the earth is filled with violence through them; and, behold, I will destroy them with the earth.

Make thee an ark of gopher wood. (*Genesis* vi. 8—14.)

NOAH was the tenth in order, of our earthly forefathers. He was born in the year 1056 from the Creation. When four hundred and eighty years old, he was warned of God concerning the awful judgments preparing for a guilty world. One hundred and twenty years after this, and one thousand six hundred and fifty-six years from the Creation, Noah being then six hundred years old, the Flood came upon the earth, and destroyed the ungodly. Noah lived after this three hundred and fifty years more; dying at the age of nine hundred and fifty years.

His character and conduct before, during, and after the Flood, will require a separate consideration for each period.

In contemplating the history of Noah before the Flood, it will be useful to inquire what was the ruling Principle of his life; and what the Conduct resulting from that principle.

1. The main, governing PRINCIPLE of this holy man, was Faith. He is one of the ancient Saints mentioned by St. Paul, as distinguished by their faith. All true servants of the Lord are marked by this grace. Faith, alike in the threatenings and in the promises of God, is what distinguishes a saint from an ungodly man. Through this faith it was that Noah was accepted of God: "Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord."—We must never extol any of the saints in such a sense, as to forget that all men are, by nature, born in sin. It is divine grace alone that makes one man to differ from another.—Noah walked by faith; and thus "became heir of the righteousness which is by faith:" (Heb. xi. 7.) He obtained the pardon of sin through the merits of that Redeemer, who was yet to come, Christ Jesus. He was justified and accounted righteous before God through faith, and not for his own works and deservings. He was a child of grace: like every other saint, he was a monument of undeserved mercy!

This living principle of faith was the cause, (as already observed,) why Noah feared the threatened judgments of God, and trusted to the appointed

method of salvation.—In like manner, every man who believes the Bible dreads eternal wrath : of which careless sinners think nothing. Believers also fly to Christ as their Redeemer : while unbelievers neglect his great salvation, and perish.

2. But the subject will be more fully illustrated, if we inquire particularly—What was the religious CONDUCT of Noah, resulting from this principle ?

His *Walking with God*, is a general and comprehensive description of his whole life. He was “a just man, and perfect in his generations.” He closely copied the example of his pious ancestor, Enoch. One and the same expression is used to describe the character of both : “Noah walked with God :” (Gen. vi. 9.) We have seen what the phrase means in the instance of Enoch ; and it must have the same signification in reference to Noah. It implies the following dispositions and habits—Faith in the unseen God, with a lively sense of his presence ; reliance on him as a Covenant-God, and the Saviour of all that believe ; a reverence for his commandments, and love for his will ; delight in communion with him ; and a desire to promote his glory ;—these are the characteristics of those who “walk with God.”

The conduct of Noah was also characterized by *Family-piety*. He was married ; and had three sons, all of whom were married, and whose names are recorded. Before the flood, it is true, nothing is mentioned concerning them excepting their names. Yet surely if we look at the statements in Gen. vi.,

we shall be unavoidably led to regard Noah's family in a very different light from all other families of the earth. It is there related (verses 1—5.) that men who were the children of pious parents, had fallen into the sinful custom of intermarrying with the children of the ungodly. Led by passion and fancy, "they took them wives of all which they chose." And they had (as the Psalmist expresses it) "children at their desire." These children might be comely and vigorous. In a worldly point of view, they were illustrious; for we read, "There were giants in the earth in those days; and also after that, when the sons of God came in unto the daughters of men, and they bare children to them, the same became mighty men which were of old, men of renown." But they were an ungodly race.—Of Noah, on the contrary, it is said, that he was "a just man, and perfect IN HIS GENERATIONS:" which term seems to imply, that in his family-character he was an exception to the corrupt mass of society in general.

But the action for which Noah is peculiarly celebrated, was, the *Preparation* he made for the coming Flood, by building an Ark. His faith was shown by his works. He "builded an ark to the saving of his house." It was the one, grand, conspicuous "work of faith," by which for a hundred and twenty years he was known to all the inhabitants of the old world. Doubtless his conduct, in all other particulars, corresponded with this main point in his history.

We must not omit, consequently, to notice that he was a *Preacher of righteousness*. Many persons shrink from becoming religious through fear of singularity: and still more would they hesitate to reprove sin in others. Noah feared not the whole race of mankind. By his building of the ark, (as St. Paul says,) "he condemned THE WORLD." Many a hard, ill-natured speech must he have encountered. What a fool would multitudes deem him, for spending his property, time and labour on a building, which seemed to them of no sort of use: and as to the coming judgment, doubtless it was the standing jest of all. Even the men who worked for Noah, and received wages from him, would be continually exclaiming, "What! no flood yet!" And thus they went on to the very last: "they ate, they drank, they married and were given in marriage, until the day that the flood came, and swept them all away." Noah endured all their mockery; still pleading with them, and preaching repentance to them.

Faith is the only principle that enables a man to withstand the fiery darts of malice and contempt. Satan employs the children of disobedience, and trains them to become very skilful in handling the weapons of ridicule. Meanwhile, the despised servant of God rejoices in the secret testimony of the Lord to his piety and faithfulness. "Thee have I seen righteous in this generation!" Such was God's declaration to Noah: and if God was for him, who could be against him? Ten thousand armies

of the ungodly, led on by legions of evil spirits, are as nothing before the Almighty! Whoever believes in the Lord Jesus Christ, may well dare to be singular: none else!



SECTION II.

NOAH IN THE ARK.

In the six hundredth year of Noah's life, in the second month, the seventeenth day of the month, the same day were all the fountains of the great deep broken up, and the windows of heaven were opened.

And the rain was upon the earth forty days and forty nights.

In the selfsame day entered Noah, and Shem, and Ham, and Japheth, the sons of Noah, and Noah's wife, and the three wives of his sons with them, into the ark;

They, and every beast after his kind, and all the cattle after their kind, and every creeping thing that creepeth upon the earth after his kind, and every fowl after his kind, every bird of every sort.

And they went in unto Noah into the ark, two and two of all flesh, wherein is the breath of life.

And they that went in, went in male and female of all flesh, as God had commanded him: and the Lord shut him in.

(*Genesis* vii. 11—16.)

At length the awful day of vengeance arrived. The Lord directed Noah and his family, with the cattle, and creeping things, and birds of the air, to enter the ark; a solemn procession, witnessed, no doubt, by thousands and tens of thousands of the ungodly inhabitants of the old world: who would gaze upon this action of the old man and his family only with

derision, thinking it the very climax of folly, or even an act of dotage.

Yet some misgivings they must have had. They would at least see that Noah and his family were in earnest. The concourse also of so many brute creatures, all congregating to one spot to be under the charge of Noah, could be regarded by them as little short of miracle. As they looked on this huge ship, built by their own hands, and tenanted for seven days by Noah and the animals, they could not but suppose that there was some remarkable purpose in the whole transaction.—Thus it is that even the most ungodly men occasionally confess, “There must be something in Religion!” Good impressions, however, soon vanish from giddy and sensual hearts. “Let him take his own way, and we will take ours”—had now for a long time been the maxim of these sinners! Noah therefore enters the ark; while the rest of mankind live on, as though nothing terrible were about to happen.

And now the heavens gather blackness: the clouds begin to burst in torrents: the fountains of the great deep are broken up, and the windows of heaven are opened. For forty days and forty nights the rain pours incessantly. The ark is lifted up above the earth. All the high hills under the whole heaven are covered: and all, in whose nostrils was the breath of life, perish.

What heart of man—(for *we* are yet living in the region of hope)—can possibly imagine the horrors of despair, which would now seize upon thousands?

While they gazed on the Ark, would they not envy Noah, the man whom recently they scorned? For a while, some of the strongest might brave it out, and fly to the highest hills: but storms from above would beat them down, and wave after wave would at length ingulph them.—Thus we behold the issue of all Unbelief. “God is not mocked: whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.” Unbelief may forfeit the day of salvation; but cannot for an hour put off the day of vengeance!

Noah would have much secular occupation in the ark: for the cattle that were with him would require regular supplies of food. But during this long period of solitude, his family, looking up to God as their Redeemer and Protector, must have had (we cannot but think) many affecting subjects for daily meditation, prayer and thanksgiving. The constant theme of their religious discourse must have been, “Behold the goodness and severity of God!”

Let us endeavour to realize to our own minds the situation of Noah, and imagine what reflections must frequently have engaged his mind, and that of his family.

1. First, they had just witnessed, in an unexampled degree, the *Severity* of God. “The world that then was, perished by water.” What a guilty world was that! God had testified of it, and Noah had seen the fact, that “the earth was filled with violence.” Men had despised the riches of the forbearance and long-suffering of God; and instead of repenting, had treasured up wrath. Noah would now reflect

on all this, with the deepest emotions of awe, while remembering many deeds of atrocity committed by individuals, or by multitudes, who were now sunk as a stone in the mighty waters!

In the view of this affecting judgment, Noah would nevertheless justify God. This we also are bound to do; remembering that justice, no less than mercy, belongeth unto God. "Let God be just:" let "every mouth be stopped, and all the world become guilty before God." "Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?"

Not only was the actual wickedness of man great in the earth; but, as it is related, "every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually." There are far more sins meditated in the heart, than sinners have opportunity to commit. God notes all our evil thoughts in the book of his remembrance: and they are reckoned against us, not less strictly than our open crimes.

2. Behold also "the *Goodness* of God!" This would be an unceasing subject of delightful meditation to Noah and his family.—It was the grace of God, which first inclined his heart to choose the service of the Lord. It was the same goodness of God, that had given him pious ancestors, to be his instructors and his examples. He must have seen also the mercy of God, in removing many pious persons by death, before the flood began. We know not exactly the characters of Lamech and Methuselah, his father and grandfather: yet Lamech appears to have been one who

had respect to the Lord, and Methuselah was the son of holy Enoch. It is worthy of remark, that these immediate ancestors of Noah were removed, before the awful time of judgment arrived: for Methuselah died just before the flood, and Lamech about five years previously. Many others, no doubt, were mercifully removed in like manner; "taken away from the evil to come."—Then the thought, "I and my family are safe!" O with what unutterable consolations would it fill the heart of Noah!—It is said, when he and all the rest had entered the ark, that "the Lord shut him in:" words expressive of the perfect security enjoyed by him and his family, but by none else! After this, not one more could enter in: and none could perish who had entered in. Whatever momentary alarms therefore Noah might experience, as he felt the ark floating about, or heard the tempest beating upon it, yet he might be sure that the Lord, who had thus far preserved, would continue to preserve him, even unto the end.

Such would naturally be the reflections of this holy man. No stretch of the fancy is wanted to imagine them: they are obvious; he could not have felt otherwise. This one thought, above all others, "We are safe!" O who can tell its comfort?—And similar to this is the joy of the believer in Christ: he can say, "I am safe!" While the Judge of quick and dead will certainly fulfil his word, that "the wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God;" no less certainly will he

fulfil his promises to all who trust in Jesus, our Redeemer! Christ is our ark of safety! "Therefore will not we fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea." "The Lord of hosts is with us: the God of Jacob is our refuge."



SECTION III.

NOAH AFTER THE FLOOD.*

And God spake unto Noah, and to his sons with him, saying, And I, behold, I establish my covenant with you, and with your seed after you;

And with every living creature that is with you, of the fowl, of the cattle, and of every beast of the earth with you; from all that go out of the ark, to every beast of the earth.

And I will establish my covenant with you; neither shall all flesh be cut off any more by the waters of a flood; neither shall there any more be a flood to destroy the earth.

(*Genesis ix. 8—11.*)

AFTER an incessant increase of the waters of the flood during a hundred and fifty days, God in his merciful providence caused them to assuage. "The fountains also of the deep and the windows of heaven were stopped, and the rain from heaven was restrained; and the waters returned from off the earth continually: and after the end of the hundred and fifty days the waters were abated." (Gen. viii. 2, 3.) Thus it would be felt that the horror of the universal tempest from without had been calmed.

After about half as much more time, (that is, two months and a half,) the ark rested: its deep keel found a lodgement on the mountains of Ararat. Now, therefore, Noah would feel himself to be on firm ground once more.

Noah and his family were not, however, as yet to be set at liberty. Another two months and a half elapse ere the tops of the mountains become visible. Calculating now on the probable re-appearance of dry land pretty generally, Noah after forty days sends forth, first a raven; which returned not: then a dove, which returned to the ark, having found no rest for the sole of her foot. Then after seven days he sends forth the dove again, which returned in the evening with an olive-leaf pluckt, in her mouth. Once more, after other seven days, he sends forth the dove; which returned no more. Noah then removes the covering of the ark, and beholds the face of the ground dry. At length, after an abode in the ark of a year and seven days, he and his family go forth upon the earth.

What a scene of devastation must the new world have exhibited to Noah! Where are the fertile regions, the habitations of men, the fields and cities which he beheld but twelve months ago? They are succeeded by dreary pools and lakes, plains of slime, torrents, and volcanoes! These had probably destroyed the traces of every dwelling, and every work of man. And where are the earth's inhabitants themselves; those men of renown, the giants of former days, the sinners of the old world? All

are sunk into silence and corruption: all gone to their account at the tribunal of God!—Noah and his family had their natural feelings as men: how then must they have been appalled, at the sight of this vast solitude! But, as servants of the Most High, they would adore both the justice which had doomed others, and the mercy which had spared them.

1. The first action of Noah, was, to *Build an altar* unto the Lord. “He took of every clean beast and of every clean fowl, and offered burnt-offerings on the altar.” He had but a small stock of each kind, to select from: yet he freely sacrifices his best. It was a thank-offering, and a peace-offering. It was as much as to say—Thou hast been favourable unto thy servants! Lord, continue to be gracious; for we need thy blessing still! Save now, we beseech thee, O Lord: O Lord, we beseech thee, send now prosperity!

2. The next thing to be observed concerning this parent of the new world, is, his *Acceptance* at the hands of the Lord. “The Lord smelled a sweet savour:” that is, he favourably accepted this sacrifice. Noah and his family might now go forth, whether to their secular labours, or to their solemn religious services, with a comfortable assurance of God’s blessing.—His sacrifice was typical; shadowing forth the redemption of a perishing world, by the blood of Jesus.

3. To this, the Lord mercifully added an express *Promise*, assuring Noah and all his posterity, that

he would no more destroy the earth with a flood of waters : but that he would continue the accustomed seasons to the end of time. "While the earth remaineth, seed-time and harvest, and cold and heat, and summer and winter, and day and night shall not cease:" (Genesis viii. 22.) a promise, which has never failed, unto this day.

4. God gave, moreover, a beautiful token of this promise in the *Rainbow*.—This lovely object is often placed before our view in rainy weather. It speaks to the eye but for a few moments : yet in mild language it seems to bid us not fear, but put our trust in God. "The bow shall be in the cloud ; and I will look upon it, that I may remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that is upon the earth." (Gen. ix. 16.)

5. The next thing to be noticed is, God's declaration concerning the *Corruption of human nature*. The Lord most emphatically instructed the new race of mankind concerning this fundamental truth. Together with his promises he binds up this doctrine—"For the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth." Such is the universal fact : there is no exception to it. This doctrine was stated before the flood. Had it been stated then only, it might have been imagined that it described the character of only the men of that age ; whereas it is a true picture of men's hearts in all ages. The heart of man is the source of all the sins and miseries, which are to be deplored at all times, in every part of the world !

Our Lord Jesus Christ has stated the same truth in fuller terms. He declares, "From within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness: all these evil things come from within, and defile the man."

Proofs enough soon occur, both in the case of Noah himself and in his family and descendants, that human nature was still corrupt.—Having planted a vineyard, and made wine, Noah was overtaken by the sin of drunkenness. One of his sons with an evil eye beheld the infirmity of his parent; and by his conduct on the occasion drew down a malediction on his posterity. In after times, men began to build the tower of Babel, which was intended to be a monument of their proud independency of God. The Scriptures have thus demonstrated beyond all contradiction, that "the imagination of man's heart is evil from his youth." All are born in sin. The faults of holy men, like Noah, are impartially narrated in the Scriptures, expressly with a view to convince us that we have no perfect righteousness of our own, whereby we may be justified before God; but that all our hope must be in Christ:—and that we need daily the cleansing of the thoughts of our hearts, by the inspiration of God's Holy Spirit.

6. The history of Noah is intended to remind us of another truth, affecting the whole human race, from Adam to the last man: namely, that there is a future *Day of Judgment*, far more terrible in its conse-

quences than even the overthrow of the flood. "The world that then was, being overflowed with waters, perished. But the heavens and the earth, which are now, are reserved unto fire against the day of judgment and perdition of ungodly men." Scoffers, walking after their own lusts, may say, "Where is the promise of Christ's coming to judge the world? where is the fulfilment of his threatenings against sinners?" They argue, that "all things continue as they were:" they willingly remain untaught by the history of the flood, and by other tremendous instances of God's anger. They *wish* that there may be no judgment, and therefore they try to *persuade* themselves there will be none. They act, speak, and think, in reality, just like the men before the flood. Oh, that we may follow the example of Noah! May we practically believe what God hath said concerning the destruction of sinners, and the salvation of believers in Christ! May we prepare with all diligence to meet our God: so that, when He shall come to judgment, we may be found of him in peace! Happy they, who, when surrounded by flaming worlds, are found looking unto Jesus! They alone will lift up their heads, knowing that their redemption draweth nigh!

CHARACTER OF ABRAHAM.

SECTION I.

ABRAHAM LEAVING HIS NATIVE COUNTRY.

Now the Lord had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father's house, unto a land that I will shew thee :

And I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing :

And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed.

So Abram departed, as the Lord had spoken unto him; and Lot went with him: and Abram was seventy and five years old when he departed out of Haran.

And Abram took Sarai his wife, and Lot his brother's son, and all their substance that they had gathered, and the souls that they had gotten in Haran; and they went forth to go into the land of Canaan; and into the land of Canaan they came.

(*Genesis* xii. 1—5.)

IN considering the character of Abraham, who is one of the most eminent saints mentioned in the word of God, it may be advantageous at the very outset to observe what titles of dignity are bestowed upon him by the sacred writers. St. James declares that he was called, "The friend of God:" (*James* ii. 23.) In truth, it is the Lord himself who thus designates him; calling him, "Abraham, my friend:" (*Isaiah* xli. 8.) Again, by St. Paul he is described

as, "The father of all them that believe:" (Romans iv. 11.) that is, he was the most distinguished Teacher and Exemplar in the earliest ages; raised up specially to instruct and animate all believers, both then and ever after, as to the duty and blessedness of living a life of faith in God.

We are not to infer, from these highly honourable titles, "The friend of God," and "The father of the faithful," that Abraham was free from faults. He was a man subject to like passions and infirmities with ourselves; and the defects of his character are plainly described in the sacred pages. It is, indeed, not a little remarkable that his defects were in their nature precisely the opposite of that grace, for which he is most highly celebrated. He erred, more than once, through unbelief. These exceptions to the general excellence of his character are recorded, in order that we may not glory in any man; no, not even in the best of men. The good that was in them was entirely from God; while their faults, which they had from themselves, were fully sufficient to prove them naturally weak, changeable, and sinful beings.

With these opening remarks, let us study the character of this holy man; applying his history, as far as it will bear the application, to our own circumstances and experience. And may the God of Abraham, by his Spirit, be our Teacher, and engrave on our hearts the saving grace of faith!

Abraham's departure from his country is the first event recorded concerning him. It is thus introduced

by Moses in his account, Genesis xii. 1—3. “Now the Lord had said unto Abram, Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father’s house, unto a land that I will shew thee: and I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing: and I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee: and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed.”

St. Paul likewise refers to the same event, and makes the following comment upon it: “By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went:” (Hebrews xi. 8.)—Several circumstances are here worthy of notice.

1. First, by this important step in life Abraham relinquished his accustomed Society; and consequently broke up his usual comforts and advantages. He had already quitted his native land; the dwelling generally so dear to the heart of every man. During the lifetime of Terah his father, the family had quitted Ur of the Chaldees, and had got as far as Haran, on his way to Canaan. Now Abraham proceeds to complete the long journey; and in so doing entirely comes out from his kindred, and his father’s house. All this must have cost him many a pang. Of his nearest relatives he took none with him; save only Sarai his wife, and Lot his nephew; together with their substance and households.

2. By thus acting, he moreover marked the Dif-

ference of his religious opinions, from those of the people whom he quitted. They were idolaters: he, a worshipper of the true God. They were living in sin: he was a servant of the Most High. He "came out and was separate from them;" not merely as it regarded the place of his dwelling, but much more as regarded the spirit of his mind.

3. Hence, he would have to encounter the ill will and enmity of many relatives, neighbours and fellow-countrymen, whom he openly condemned by leaving them. Some would think him censorious and morose: to many he would appear a rash adventurer: and all would account him needlessly singular.

If we review these three particulars in the commencement of Abraham's history, we shall see in them some resemblance to the circumstances of those, who are impelled by conscientious motives to quit the society of worldly persons. We indeed, when truly converted to God, are not required, generally speaking, to quit either our place, or our customary engagements. If it were attempted to draw such a wild idea as this from the history of Abraham, the proper method of correcting the error would be to cite St. Paul's rule, 1 Cor. vii. 20. "Let every man abide in the same calling wherein he was called."—A restless, uneasy mind is not agreeable to sound Christian principles. If any change in our position be really desirable, Providence will usually point out to us what we ought to do. But for the most part we shall find it best to aim at

glorifying God in the sphere where his grace found us.

To relinquish sinful principles and practices, however, is at all times our bounden duty : even at the too probable risk of offending former associates in iniquity. That such persons will take umbrage, is pretty certain. In thus acting, therefore, we must beseech God to inspire us with the self-denying faith of Abraham. "This is the victory that overcometh the world, even our faith."

There is one thing very remarkable in the circumstances of Abraham ; and we may here notice it by way of anticipation : namely, that when he had obeyed the call of God, and actually entered Canaan, he did not there immediately find rest. On the contrary, his faith was tried by the corrupt society which he found in those regions : "The Canaanite was then in the land:" a race of men most vile, and abhorred of God. Thus Abraham exchanged one set of trials for another. And, in like manner, they who come out from an evil world, and devote themselves to the service of Christ, do not instantly inherit all the spiritual joys, which perhaps they promised themselves. They must learn to wait. Our life here is a scene of probation, conflict and suffering. But if we be guided by the Lord, we shall also be preserved and comforted by him. They who are led by the motives which impelled Abraham, will in due time experimentally know likewise his abounding consolations.

SECTION II.

ABRAHAM ARRIVING AT THE PROMISED LAND.

And Abram passed through the land unto the place of Sichem, unto the plain of Moreh. And the Canaanite was then in the land.

And the Lord appeared unto Abram, and said, Unto thy seed will I give this land: and there builded he an altar unto the Lord, who appeared unto him.

And he removed from thence unto a mountain on the east of Beth-el, and pitched his tent, having Beth-el on the west, and Hai on the east: and there he builded an altar unto the Lord, and called upon the name of the Lord.

(*Genesis* xii. 6—8.)

At the time of Abraham's entering the promised land, he was seventy-five years old: there remained of his lifetime just one hundred years yet to live. Of the earlier part of his sojourn on earth, but little is known: it was during these latter hundred years that the most instructive events of his life took place.

This, then, is a proper place for the inquiry, By what considerations was the patriarch induced to undertake this distant journey, and commence a settlement in a new land? How was he encouraged in his enterprise? and, How did he act?

1. First, as to the *Ground* of his conduct. It is clear that the sole motive of this whole transaction of Abraham was, the word of the Lord. "He departed, as the Lord had spoken unto him." Any thing less than God's command would not have moved him; but this sufficed. In what way God

communicated his "word" is not exactly explained to us: we know only, in general, that of old God spake sometimes in vision to his saints. He addressed them, while sleeping or in a trance, conveying his will to them in a manner perfectly intelligible to their own minds. What we possess, is, the will of God recorded in Scripture: they received intimations of that will in visions or dreams; and sometimes by a voice, as the voice of a man.

In whatever way the will of the Lord is made known to us, our duty is to believe and obey. So did Abraham. And though he knew not, step by step, whither he went, yet step by step he went on, till at length he was safely conducted into the land of promise.—Even then he had no certain dwelling-place. He was frequently on the move. "By faith (says St. Paul) he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise: for he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God:" (Hebrews xi. 9, 10.)

2. As to the *Encouragements* enjoyed by Abraham, these consisted in promises immeasurably great: promises such as never before had centered on one man. Though as yet he was childless, yet God declares his intention to make of him a great nation. Though he was at present an obscure individual, the Lord engages to make his name great: a promise which hath been fulfilled literally; for probably no man's name has ever been more universally

known and venerated among all nations of the world, than that of Abraham. The Lord promises him unlimited protection: "I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee." These promises were made, no doubt, partly to Abraham on his own account; partly to the family and nation that should spring from him.—To crown all the other encouragements vouchsafed to him, he had the assurance from God, that he should himself "be a blessing," that "in him should all the families of the earth be blessed." This prophetic declaration related principally to the coming of the Messiah, the Redeemer of the world; who, according to the flesh, was to descend from Abraham. But, besides this distinguished honour of being the progenitor of Christ, Abraham was in various ways a blessing to all connected with him. "To be blessed, and to be a blessing," is the summit of all earthly happiness: nay, it points even higher, extending into the eternal world. What glorious prospects were thus opened to the view of this holy patriarch!

3. Next, as to his *Conduct*, mark how religiously he acted. We read that on his arriving in the promised land, "the Lord appeared to him, and said, Unto thy seed will I give this land." Before his setting out, the promise went no further than, "a land that I will *shew* thee:" now the land is *given*. God did indeed give Abraham himself "none inheritance in it, no, not so much as to set his foot on:" that is, not as his own. Yet the holy patriarch took possession of it "for God:" for it is said—"There

he builded an altar unto the Lord, who appeared unto him." Abraham was eminently a devout man. Wherever God led him to pitch his tent, there he resolved the Lord should have an altar. We frequently read, "There builded he an altar unto the Lord, and called upon the name of the Lord."

From such a commencement we might justly expect to hear great things concerning this "friend of God," this "father of the faithful." Nor shall we be disappointed: but let us, for the present, follow out this part of his history, in its obvious spiritual application.

Let us view Abraham's journey from Haran, and his arrival at Canaan, as an emblem of our separating ourselves from this sinful world, and setting out like pilgrims in search of a better country, even an heavenly.

The very first step taken by any one converted to God, is a step taken in faith. The true Convert is one who believes (and he believes rightly) that God hath called him to seek deliverance from this present evil world; to quit sinful associates; to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts; and to follow whithersoever the Saviour shall lead him. At first he goes forth, as it were, "not knowing whither he goeth:" not apprehending, that is, very distinctly, either the difficulties, the duties, or the encouragements belonging to his course. All he knows at the first, is, that he is invited by God to journey unto a good land: he is persuaded by the sure word of promise, that Wisdom's ways are ways of pleasantness,

and all her paths are peace. He knows, moreover, that whosoever loveth father or mother, brother or sister, more than Christ, is not worthy of Him. Gladly would he persuade, if possible, all his friends to follow Christ together with him: but if they refuse to join company, he is willing to go alone, or with very few, rather than disobey God, and lose his own soul. His taste of the early pleasures of a religious life, may be compared to Abraham's first arrival at Canaan: he is not yet fully instated in his noblest privileges. Yet he has seen enough of the faithfulness and loving-kindness of the Lord, to make him desirous of entering, and continuing in his blessed service. "This God (he says) is our God for ever and ever: he shall be our guide even unto death." Thus, with dim perceptions, yet with a strong faith, he heartily unites himself to Christ. All that he possesses, and all that he hopes for, is from the Lord and for the Lord. Light, love and joy are vouchsafed to him in an increasing measure: he lives a life of prayer, and in the midst of a perverse generation makes it his grand study to glorify the Lord, and do good unto all men.

Happy, venerable patriarch! didst thou ever on earth pine after the advantages of Haran, or long to return to Ur of the Chaldees? Or dost thou now repent thy pilgrim-days spent in the land of Canaan? In like manner we may ask—Did ever a genuine believer count himself a loser for having surrendered the vanities of this world, while seeking first the kingdom of God and his righteousness? Oh no!

The very dawns of a life of faith are sufficiently delightful and satisfying, to knit our hearts to God's service. They who begin thus, shall certainly taste more and more that the Lord is gracious; and in the end shall be abundantly blessed with faithful Abraham!



SECTION III.

ABRAHAM FAILING IN HIS FAITH.

And Abram journeyed, going on still toward the south.

And there was a famine in the land: and Abram went down into Egypt to sojourn there; for the famine was grievous in the land.

And it came to pass, when he was come near to enter into Egypt, that he said unto Sarai his wife, Behold now, I know that thou art a fair woman to look upon:

Therefore it shall come to pass, when the Egyptians shall see thee, that they shall say, This is his wife: and they will kill me, but they will save thee alive.

Say, I pray thee, thou art my sister: that it may be well with me for thy sake; and my soul shall live because of thee.

(*Genesis* xii. 9—13.)

HAVING sojourned awhile in the promised land, Abraham is next compelled by a grievous famine to migrate for a season into Egypt. Hereupon circumstances occurred, which showed the character of this eminent saint to be very far indeed from perfect. In commenting on the events alluded to, it will be convenient to notice, at the same time, a similar case of failing faith in Abraham, which occurred two and twenty years afterwards.

The facts of these two cases are as follows:—
“It came to pass, when he was come near to enter into Egypt, that he said unto Sarai his wife, Behold now, I know that thou art a fair woman to look upon: therefore it shall come to pass, when the Egyptians shall see thee, that they shall say, This is his wife: and they will kill me, but they will save thee alive. Say, I pray thee, thou art my sister: that it may be well with me for thy sake; and my soul shall live because of thee:” (Genesis xii. 11—13.) The consequence of this deceit was, that Sarah was taken into the family of Pharaoh, king of Egypt: and had it not been for the special interposition of God, Abraham would have lost his wife, though probably his own life would have been spared.

The other instance was on occasion of Abraham's journeying into the south country, and staying some time in Gerar. “And Abraham said of Sarah his wife, She is my sister: and Abimelech king of Gerar sent and took Sarah:” (Genesis xx. 1, 2.) In this case, again, but for the miraculous interposition of God, Abraham would have been finally separated from Sarah; his family-peace would have been destroyed; and the promised blessing to his posterity probably forfeited. (The whole of these two narratives may be read in chapters xii. and xx. of the book of Genesis.)

A few instructive remarks will naturally arise from the view thus exhibited of Abraham's character.

1. First, it is clear that his mind was but imperfectly influenced by the law of Truth. We, who have so full a revelation of God's will in the Holy Scriptures, are perhaps not altogether fair judges of the errors and faults committed by holy men, in the early ages of the world. "The times of this ignorance God winked at:" that is, he suffered men, even good men, to do many things in their ignorance, which it was his purpose afterwards more distinctly to condemn and to correct.—Abraham evidently acted for a while on a system of prevarication: God marked his displeasure, and twice rebuked him: and in this way the patriarch was taught and disciplined. Had he previously understood the jealousy of God in reference to the law of perfect Truth, Abraham's sin would have been more deeply malignant: at the best, he manifested most lamentable infirmity of principle.

2. We may inquire then, in the next place—To what must we attribute this infirmity of Abraham? It arose from the weakness of his faith. He mistrusted the protection of God. He acted as if he had forgotten the promise, "I will curse them that curse thee;" a promise designed to secure him, and all belonging to him, from every evil and every annoyance that could be possibly feared. God delivered him and his wife twice, when in serious danger, having placed themselves in the most critical circumstances; Sarah being exposed to the lawless will of the very persons Abraham dreaded. Could not the Lord—and would he not—have delivered

them, had Abraham from the first boldly stood his ground? Was there not a promise strong enough, assuring him of the faithfulness of the Almighty?

3. And here we may notice another faulty point in the patriarch's conduct on these two occasions—He leaned to his own understanding. He was alarmed for his safety: in this predicament, he put more confidence in his own contrivances than in a divine promise. When in the least degree we decline from God, how soon are we tempted to swerve from truth, and to repose on our own petty schemes of expediency!

4. Was there not also in Abraham's policy somewhat of that selfishness which is often drawn out by timidity? He risks Sarah's virtue and comfort, for his own safety. Instead of protecting her, he makes her protect him. He set out with this unsound principle: "It came to pass, when God caused me to wander from my father's house, that I said unto her, This is thy kindness which thou shalt shew unto me; at every place whither we shall come, say of me, He is my brother:" (Genesis xx. 13.) Probably they both thought that the deceit would, on the whole, work well, and that they should steer through their difficulties best in this way. The rebukes addressed to them, both by Pharaoh and Abimelech, were well adapted to teach them, that this course was not only unsafe, but highly dishonourable.

5. We may add, that Abraham erred also in his uncharitable judgment of the princes of those coun-

tries, where he was seeking a hospitable asylum. True, they were heathens; and they were accustomed to stretches of arbitrary power. Yet eventually they showed themselves to have consciences, and in some measure the fear of God.—Abraham, instead of hazarding inconvenience by aiming to teach them the ways of God, took a course which endangered them and all their people.

There are one or two further reflections, which force themselves on our minds, when we view this history in connection with the doctrines of the Gospel.

First, it is most evident that by faith, and not by his works, was Abraham justified. His works, to justify him, ought to have been perfect: this they assuredly were not.—But how could his faith be the means of his justification, when that very faith was so imperfect? Simply for this reason; that his faith, feeble and defective as it was, yet was the means, THE APPOINTED MEANS, of conveying to him the mercy of the Lord; that abounding mercy and grace, whereby his servants are pardoned, accepted, accounted righteous for Christ's sake, and finally rewarded with the free gift of eternal life.

Next, we may notice how prone to transgress are even the most highly distinguished believers. Abraham either had learnt very little from his first lesson; or else he was so unwatchful over the corruptions of his heart, that he again, (after twenty-two

years, as we have noticed,) fell into precisely the same sin and the same danger, in respect of his domestic relation. What is man! What the best of men, if God leave them for one moment to themselves!—But the Lord will not finally forsake them that are his. God was faithful to his engagements with Abraham and Sarah, notwithstanding the treacherousness of their dealings with him. “Thou wast a God that forgavest them, though thou tookest vengeance of their inventions.” (Psalm xcix. 8.)

SECTION IV.

ABRAHAM AND LOT SEPARATING.

And there was a strife between the herdmen of Abram's cattle and the herdmen of Lot's cattle: and the Canaanite and the Perizzite dwelled then in the land.

And Abram said unto Lot, Let there be no strife, I pray thee, between me and thee, and between my herdmen and thy herdmen; for we be brethren.

Is not the whole land before thee? separate thyself, I pray thee, from me: if thou wilt take the left hand, then I will go to the right; or if thou depart to the right hand, then I will go to the left.

And Lot lifted up his eyes, and beheld all the plain of Jordan, that it was well watered everywhere, before the Lord destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah, even as the garden of the Lord, like the land of Egypt, as thou comest unto Zoar.

Then Lot chose him all the plain of Jordan; and Lot journeyed east: and they separated themselves the one from the other.

Abram dwelled in the land of Canaan, and Lot dwelled in the cities of the plain, and pitched his tent toward Sodom.

But the men of Sodom were wicked and sinners before the Lord exceedingly. (*Genesis* xiii. 7—13.)

ABRAHAM had now become a man of great substance : he was "very rich in cattle, in silver and in gold." His nephew Lot, also, which went with Abraham, had flocks, and herds, and tents. Lot alone, of all their kindred, had accompanied Abraham in his pilgrimages; and, through the gift of God, he shared in the prosperity of his uncle. But prosperity may prove to be no real blessing: when it brings us much into the society of sinners, it opens a wide door to incalculable evils:—as we shall see was the case with Lot, whose melancholy history now comes before us.

These two pilgrim-shepherds—for such they were—had, in the course of their wanderings, arrived once more at the very spot where Abraham first builded an altar, and called on the name of the Lord. Here therefore he renewed his solemn vows.—On a survey of their wealth, it was found that the land was not sufficient to receive them both dwelling together. The first proof of this fact—(and it is a common way in which the overgrown wealth of families discovers itself)—was, strife in their own households. The troubles and quarrels attendant upon their augmented riches did not spring from the heathen, in whose land they sojourned; but from "the herdmen of Abram's cattle and the herdmen of Lot's cattle." The plague began at home.—Abraham quickly perceived the evil, and deplored it. He saw how dishonourable it would prove to the cause of true Religion, and how disadvantageous it was to themselves. Dissension would by degrees work its

way to the heads of families. He therefore sought a remedy. He "said to Lot, Let there be no strife, I pray thee, between me and thee, and between my herdmen and thy herdmen; for we be brethren. Is not the whole land before thee? separate thyself, I pray thee, from me: if thou wilt take the left hand, then I will go to the right; or if thou depart to the right hand, then I will go the left."

This was a generous offer on the part of Abraham, and argued in him a truly noble mind. Let us observe how Lot received it: for here is the turning point in his history.

The course which he took is thus related:—"And Lot lifted up his eyes, and beheld all the plain of Jordan, that it was well watered everywhere, before the Lord destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah, even as the garden of the Lord, like the land of Egypt, as thou comest unto Zoar. Then Lot chose him all the plain of Jordan; and Lot journeyed east: and they separated themselves the one from the other. Abram dwelled in the land of Canaan, and Lot dwelled in the cities of the plain, and pitched his tent toward Sodom. But the men of Sodom were wicked and sinners before the Lord exceedingly." (Genesis xiii. 10—13.)

Now from this narrative we may observe the following particulars.

1. First, while Abraham manifested great prudence in the course which he recommended, Lot does not appear to have shown any thing of that regret and hesitation, which would have been most becoming in

such circumstances. He would have done well to reason somewhat in this manner—"My aged relative has the prior claim: let him choose and direct. Let me be thankful to take what he leaves; for to him I owe every thing: God's blessing attends me, more on his account than on my own. Most deeply must I regret the necessity for separating myself from so pious, venerable, and highly valued a relative. Let me not presume to think of setting up for my own master, but honour him who is in every sense so vastly my superior. It is true, he gives me the precedence, and bids me choose: but let me not take advantage of his condescending goodness."

This, we say, is the way in which Lot might with the greatest propriety have felt: but there is not in the narrative the slightest intimation that he did so feel or argue within himself. He appears to have gone straight on; with a quick eye (as he supposed) to his own interest.

2. And this leads to a second observation: namely, with what eagerness he caught at an apparent worldly advantage. It is difficult for a man to behold a glittering prize within his reach, and keep his hands off. Lot gazed on the tempting, fertile region of the plain of Jordan: and forthwith he decides. "Lot chose him all the plain of Jordan." This main point settled, he journeys east.—Quickly are unhappy projects conceived and executed, when once the heart is perverted by the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life!

3. But next, be it remarked, Lot did by this conduct relinquish advantages of infinite value. "They separated themselves the one from the other." What was this but to quit the pious circle of Abraham's household? He left the ancient family-altar! Most probably he departed with the solemn counsels and prayers of Abraham: but he lost the benefit of constant intercourse with the most eminent saint then living, the father of the faithful, the friend of God!

4. Moreover, Lot hereby placed himself in the very worst possible position. For "the men of Sodom were wicked, and sinners before the Lord exceedingly." Before changing our dwelling-place, this affecting story may warn us to inquire—"What kind of neighbourhood is it to which I am going? Is God worshipped there, or Belial? Shall we find pious friends there; or only sensual, vicious, covetous, proud, worldly-minded society?"

So then these two righteous men—(for with all his inconsistencies, Lot was yet really a servant of the Lord)—these two righteous men, we say, were parted. Abraham remains, and is re-animated by a new communication of the promises of God. This kind of encouragement, probably, the Lord saw he needed, in order to preserve him from being disconcerted by the future disasters of his nephew. Lot goes forth, flattering himself with fair hopes: but he soon found himself in a situation, where he vexed his righteous soul from day to day. After this period he appears to have been always under the rod of correction, even to the very last.

The practical lessons to be learned from this part of Sacred History, shall be given in the simple language of Scripture itself. On the one hand—"If riches increase, set not your heart upon them:" (Ps. lxii. 10.) "Labour not to be rich: cease from thine own wisdom:" (Prov. xxiii. 4.) "Evil communications corrupt good manners:" (1 Cor. xv. 33.)

On the other hand—"Godliness with contentment is great gain:" (1 Tim. vi. 6.) "The blessing of the Lord, it maketh rich; and he addeth no sorrow with it:" (Prov. x. 22.) A true son of Abraham may exult in declaring, as David did, "The Lord is the portion of mine inheritance and of my cup: thou maintainest my lot. The lines are fallen unto me in pleasant places; yea, I have a goodly heritage." (Ps. xvi. 5, 6.)

SECTION V.

ABRAHAM RESCUING LOT FROM CAPTIVITY.

And there came one that had escaped, and told Abram the Hebrew; for he dwelt in the plain of Mamre the Amorite, brother of Eshcol, and brother of Aner: and these were confederate with Abram.

And when Abram heard that his brother was taken captive, he armed his trained servants, born in his own house, three hundred and eighteen, and pursued them unto Dan.

And he divided himself against them, he and his servants, by night, and smote them, and pursued them unto Hobah, which is on the left hand of Damascus.

And he brought back all the goods, and also brought again his brother Lot, and his goods, and the women also, and the people.

And the king of Sodom went out to meet him after his return from the slaughter of Chedorlaomer, and of the kings that were with him, at the valley of Shaveh, which is the king's dale.

And Melchizedek king of Salem brought forth bread and wine :
and he was the priest of the most high God.

And he blessed him, and said, Blessed be Abram of the most
high God, possessor of heaven and earth :

And blessed be the most high God, which hath delivered
thine enemies into thy hand. And he gave him tithes of all.

(*Genesis* xiv. 13—20.)

WHEN the servants of God place themselves in
situations not becoming their character, they may
expect troubles enough. And yet their very afflic-
tions are intended for their benefit : and in due time
our heavenly Father, who is full of compassion,
sends them deliverances far beyond all that they
looked for, and far beyond what they deserved.

Thus it proved in the case of Lot ; who was soon
overtaken by what seemed to be hopeless ruin : but
for whose effectual rescue Abraham was promptly
raised up.

1. First, Lot being in a corrupt neighbourhood,
shared the misfortunes of war which fell on the cities
of the plain. If we venture into bad society, and then
suffer with them, we may thank ourselves for it.
There are few consolations, nay, there are almost no
alleviations for those who bring calamity down upon
their own heads, by the imprudent choice of their
company.

Lot's unhappy ruin appeared complete. War is
generally unsparing. In this instance the victors,
having seized all the goods of Sodom and Gomorrah,
made no distinction in favour of strangers. "They
took Lot, Abram's brother's son, who dwelt in
Sodom, and his goods, and departed."

2. This melancholy reverse in Lot's condition afforded an occasion for the display of Abraham's nobleness of character. Hearing of his nephew's calamity, he is instantly moved with compassion for the sufferers, and also with zeal for their common interest in the true Religion. Under these impulses, Abraham instantly succoured him.—Those who desire to help a friend in distress, must act with promptitude. In such circumstances, Time is a main point.

It is an evidence of the wealth and likewise of the influence that Abraham had attained, that he should be able at a moment to muster three hundred and eighteen trained servants born in his own house, (besides certain confederates;) men capable of putting to rout four kings; one of those kings being proudly entitled, "King of nations." But God was with Abraham:—so he smote them, and followed up the defeat to a great distance further. "And he brought back all the goods, and also brought again his brother Lot, and his goods, and the women also and the people." How signal a blessing did this venerable man confer upon a whole nation, no less than on his own connections!

It was on this occasion that Abraham met Melchizedek, king of Salem; who came out, as a superior, to refresh and to bless Abraham, and his company. A transaction, this, intended to convey a most important lesson to the Jewish Church in distant ages. It shows them that there was, even in Canaan, and even in Abraham's life-time, a greater than their

father Abraham; a priest of the most high God, to whom even Abraham gave tithes of all. It was, moreover, a typical transaction, designed to prove that the Gospel is superior to the Law; that Christ is above Moses, and even above Abraham; and consequently that our privileges in these latter days, are infinitely greater than any enjoyed by the saints of ancient times. They had the shadow: we have the very substance of the divine benediction. The covenant made with the fathers had "infirmity," and was only temporary. In Christ we have the perfection of God's revelation; a covenant which cannot be annulled, a kingdom which cannot be moved.

The more we contemplate Abraham's character, the more dignified does it appear. Even on this occasion, when he had rendered the highest possible service to the king of Sodom, he disdained to accept the remuneration proffered him by that sovereign, who was the head and representative of a wicked nation. Abraham takes high ground: and hereby sets an example to Lot of spotless holiness and disinterested magnanimity.—Did Lot profit by this example? Did he, as he conveniently might have done, withdraw from the neighbourhood of Sodom, and hail so favourable an opportunity of re-uniting himself to the society of the "father of the faithful?" Did he regard his recent calamity as a warning voice, counselling him to have no more fellowship with those workers of iniquity? How he ought to have interpreted the divine judgments, and how he ought at this critical time to have acted, we are not

expressly told in the Scriptures. From the sequel of his story, however, we can have no hesitation in saying that it had been well for him, had he resolved, at this very time, to quit Sodom, even at any loss! But self-seekers often become so confused in their apprehensions of the path of duty, that they know not how to extricate themselves from the most desperate situation, even though a happy moment offers for their doing so. When the servants of God become thus entangled, God not unfrequently shows mercy towards them, by violently thrusting them out from their position; a position in which they can neither render Him service, nor find any peace for their own souls.

This the Lord actually did, in the instance of unhappy Lot; as we shall learn from a subsequent part of the narrative.

SECTION VI.

ABRAHAM'S EXALTED CHARACTER IN HIS FAMILY AND HOUSEHOLD.

And the Lord said, Shall I hide from Abraham that thing which I do;

Seeing that Abraham shall surely become a great and mighty nation, and all the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him?

For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment; that the Lord may bring upon Abraham that which he hath spoken of him.

(*Genesis* xviii. 17—19.)

In order to close the account of Lot, we anticipate somewhat in the narrative of Abraham: taking up

the latter part of the xviiiith and the whole of the sixth chapter of Genesis.

It was the settled purpose of the Lord to destroy the cities of the plain, whose sins were so vile and so grievous in his sight. The time of vengeance being now fully ripe, He, for wise reasons, revealed his intentions to Abraham: and in so doing He gives this holy man the highest character for domestic piety. He affords him also an opportunity of pleading for the devoted cities of the plain: yet the Lord finally takes his own course, both in the destruction of Sodom and the deliverance of Lot.

We must, however, first, advert to the noble character here given by the Lord himself to Abraham. "For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment."

Here is the pattern of a pious head of a family. His influence extends to all within his range. Children as they grow up, and domestics as they are gathered around him, all feel his governing hand. The establishment of the patriarch was, from his first quitting Haran for Canaan, not inconsiderable. It went on increasing: and that to such a degree, that, (as we have just seen,) when he set forth to rescue Lot, he could muster three hundred and eighteen stout-hearted men around his standard. Probably several or most of these were, like their master, believers in the Lord: not merely conforming to the godly customs of Abraham, but worshipping Jehovah in spirit and in truth.

And whence the mighty and happy influence of this patriarch? We may attribute it to three causes, which are all mentioned in this verse.

1. First, to the *Rule* of conduct by which Abraham was guided. He chose "the way of the Lord," the law of "justice and judgment." In this he is an admirable pattern to us. When the Bible is acknowledged by us, as our constant rule—the rule for all in our house—then God is truly honoured: and the Lord will fulfil his promise to those heads of families who thus exalt Him, as their superior Head. "Them that honour me, I will honour."

2. Next we may ascribe Abraham's influence to the holy and consistent *Example* which he set. For the words, "After him," denote that he himself walked "Before" his household in those paths, in which he desired that they should follow him. Example is generally the first thing by which children and domestics learn. It fixes what we teach far more than mere precept: without it, precept has but little good effect, and often serves only to irritate.

3. A third cause of Abraham's influence was, the judicious and friendly *Authority* with which he governed. As a good man, a good father, and a good master, he had a special right to be obeyed: for he ruled on God's behalf. He might therefore very properly take the "command" of his household. Indeed, a pious head of a family is bound to do so. It is his duty to keep up good government. Human nature is such a corrupt thing, that children and

domestics would soon become wayward and rebellious, were not the due tone of authority maintained, keeping all in their proper place. The restraints which Abraham would have to impose, might sometimes appear irksome to those under his command. Occasionally he was himself perplexed to know how best to controul the irregularities that sprung up, under his own eye. But, no doubt, in these and all other cases, he had recourse by prayer to God, as his counsellor: and counsel was given him. Thus he ruled under God, and for God. And the Lord both blessed him with his secret favour, and likewise honoured him in terms of express approbation: "I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment: that the Lord may bring upon Abraham that which he hath spoken of him:"—that is, that he should become a great and mighty nation; and that all the nations of the earth should be blessed in him.

It was at this time, and under these circumstances, that the Lord revealed to Abraham his purpose of visiting the cities of the plain with utter destruction. The spirit of Abraham, when interceding on behalf of those few righteous persons whom he supposed to be in the city, is highly instructive. It will form, together with the close of Lot's history, the subject of the next section.

SECTION VII.

ABRAHAM INTERCEDING FOR SODOM—LOT SAVED, AND THE CITIES OF THE PLAIN DESTROYED.

And the Lord said, Because the cry of Sodom and Gomorrah is great, and because their sin is very grievous ;

I will go down now, and see whether they have done altogether according to the cry of it, which is come unto me ; and if not, I will know.

And the men turned their faces from thence, and went toward Sodom : but Abraham stood yet before the Lord.

And Abraham drew near, and said, Wilt thou also destroy the righteous with the wicked ?

Peradventure there be fifty righteous within the city : wilt thou also destroy and not spare the place for the fifty righteous that are therein ?

That be far from thee to do after this manner, to slay the righteous with the wicked : and that the righteous should be as the wicked, that be far from thee : Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right ?

And the Lord said, If I find in Sodom fifty righteous within the city, then I will spare all the place for their sakes.

And Abraham answered and said, Behold now, I have taken upon me to speak unto the Lord, which am but dust and ashes :

Peradventure there shall lack five of the fifty righteous : wilt thou destroy all the city for lack of five ? And he said, If I find there forty and five, I will not destroy it.

And he spake unto him yet again, and said, Peradventure there shall be forty found there. And he said, I will not do it for forty's sake.

And he said unto him, Oh let not the Lord be angry, and I will speak : Peradventure there shall be thirty found there. And he said, I will not do it, if I find thirty there.

And he said, Behold now, I have taken upon me to speak unto the Lord : Peradventure there shall be twenty found there. And he said, I will not destroy it for twenty's sake.

And he said, Oh let not the Lord be angry, and I will speak

yet but this once : Peradventure ten shall be found there. And he said, I will not destroy it for ten's sake.

And the Lord went his way, as soon as he had left communing with Abraham : and Abraham returned unto his place.

(*Genesis* xviii. 20—33.)

THE cities of the plain had now filled up the measure of their iniquities, and God arose to judgment. Yet, in order to convince us of the equitableness of his proceeding, the Omniscient Jehovah deigns to speak after the manner of men, and declares his intention of coming down from heaven, to make previous inquiry (as a just judge ought to do) into the facts of the case. The Lord intimates, also, his readiness to mitigate his severity, should circumstances admit : “ I will examine whether the accusing cry of their sins be confirmed : and if not, I will know : I will judge and act impartially.”

Abraham, thus encouraged by the declarations of God, and by what he knew of the divine attributes, hereupon begins to plead in behalf of the cities in the midst of which Lot dwelt. His intercession is very remarkable in its character, and worthy of our study. Let us aim, with the assistance of the Holy Spirit, to apprehend the meaning of its various parts, and gain instruction and encouragement from the narrative.

1. The very first expression exhibits to us that privilege of free *Access* to God, which is enjoyed by every believer : — “ Abraham drew near.” His heart was prepared to pray : and in praying he approached the Lord, as a sinner reconciled to Him, and not afraid of Him. His demeanour answers to the

title subsequently given to him by God himself, (Isaiah xli. 8.) "Abraham, my friend." A friend, even an humble friend, enters with a certain degree of freedom into the presence of the person who has admitted him to friendship.—This is entirely consonant to the whole spirit of the Gospel. In the New Testament we are explicitly taught in what manner we are thus made the friends of the Most High. Thus St. Paul, writing to the Ephesians, says, "You, who were sometimes afar off, yet now hath he reconciled:" ye are "brought nigh by the blood of his cross." And being thus redeemed, we are exhorted by the same Apostle in the following strain: "Let us DRAW NEAR, with a true heart, in full assurance of faith." In all our prayers for ourselves, and in our intercessions for others, we are bid to approach and pour forth all our desires: "Let us come boldly unto the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need."

2. But next observe, how the boldness of Abraham is tempered with *Humility*. The nearer he comes to God, the more deeply does he abase himself. He confesses himself to be but "dust and ashes:" so vile and so unworthy, that, had it not been for the condescension of the Lord, it would have been the utmost presumption in him to open his lips before the Divine majesty. — And this spirit of humility is felt by all, who are made to know the purity of the Divine character, and their own sinfulness. Neither is it diminished by the

habit of intimate communion with God: on the contrary, it is increased by frequent prayer. It is feelingly expressed by various Scripture saints: especially by Job, who, in the presence of the Lord, exclaims, "Behold I am vile: What shall I answer thee? I will lay mine hand upon my mouth. I have heard of thee by the hearing of the ear, but now mine eye seeth thee. Wherefore I abhor myself, and repent in dust and ashes."

3. Abraham also declares his *Submission* to the righteousness and equity of the Lord. Though he trembled at the prospect of judgments, yet in these very judgments he justified God. "Righteous art thou, O Lord, when I plead with thee." Fearful indeed must be the end of the ungodly generation: but, Thou continuest holy! We are criminals: Thou art our Judge: and "shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?"—This is conformable to the argument of St. Paul, who declares, in the fullest manner, (Romans iii. 19.) "Now we know that whatsoever things the law saith, it saith to them who are under the law; that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God."

4. Abraham, however, puts in the *Plea of mercy*. He entreats for himself; for the supposed righteous in Sodom; yea, for the city itself. "Let not the Lord be angry: wilt thou destroy the righteous with the wicked? Wilt thou not spare the place?" Such were the earnest petitions of this holy and humble man.—Nothing is more pleasing to the Lord, than to be thus reminded of his attribute of mercy: espe-

cially as it is confirmed to us, by the death of his own dear Son. "He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all; how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?"—"God be merciful!" should form our unceasing prayer. And when the petition is not answered favourably, on behalf of others, yet we have good ground for believing that our prayers will return into our own bosom.

5. It might be added, that, up to a certain point, the intercession of Abraham was characterized by *Perseverance*: but towards the end, he failed in this point. As the Lord yielded one petition after another, Abraham kept pressing his plea, and filling his mouth with arguments. Yet at length, (thinking, perhaps, that Lot's household, for which he was most interested, could not possibly comprise fewer than ten righteous persons,) he stops at that number: "I will speak yet but this once."—Upon this part of the subject, it may be the most practically useful to quote the Apostolic injunctions, which show that we ought to put no limits to our perseverance: "Pray without ceasing:"—"praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints."

But though Sodom and Gomorrah were destroyed, Lot was saved: among other reasons, for this—To convince us, that "the Lord knoweth how to deliver the godly out of temptations." Lot had passed a wretched existence in the abode of his own choosing.

He was daily vexed with "the filthy conversation of the wicked." "That righteous man (says St. Peter) dwelling among them, in seeing and hearing, vexed his righteous soul from day to day with their unlawful deeds." After this, his history grows more and more sad, till it closes at length in dishonourable obscurity.—When we attempt to calculate his gains and his losses, the account tells mournfully on one side. What he gained, was, a temporary gratification, as he led his ample flocks to the well-watered plains of Jordan: that was all! He lost—his religious standing in the family of Abraham: for a time, his liberty: his peace of mind: all his property, twice: then his wife, who was turned into a pillar of salt: finally, his domestic honour and virtue: and he seems to have been not far from losing his soul! He "scarcely was saved!" Had not the pen of inspiration, in the New Testament, assigned him the titles of "just Lot," and "that righteous man," scarcely could we have dared to class him among the servants of God.

Faithful Abraham, meanwhile, grew stronger and stronger; and was shortly about to see his family built up in honour and comfort, by the birth of the promised Isaac.

SECTION VIII.

ABRAHAM, A BELIEVER IN THE LORD.

After these things the word of the Lord came unto Abram in a vision, saying, Fear not, Abram : I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward.

And Abram said, Lord God, what wilt thou give me, seeing I go childless, and the steward of my house is this Eliezer of Damascus ?

And Abram said, Behold, to me thou hast given no seed : and, lo, one born in my house is mine heir.

And, behold, the word of the Lord came unto him, saying, This shall not be thine heir ; but he that shall come forth out of thine own bowels shall be thine heir.

And he brought him forth abroad, and said, Look now toward heaven, and tell the stars, if thou be able to number them : and he said unto him, So shall thy seed be.

And he believed in the Lord ; and he counted it to him for righteousness. (*Genesis* xv. 1—6.)

AFTER the spirited conduct of Abraham, in rescuing Lot, and chasing the hostile kings as far as to Dan, it was natural that he should fear the resentment of those powerful chiefs. The Lord assured his servant that he should be effectually protected and blessed. God had now turned the wrath of man to his praise ; and having done so, he determined to restrain the remainder of that wrath. The warrior-patriarch therefore might return in peace to his dwelling in Canaan, secured by this declaration made to him in a vision ; “ Fear not, Abram : I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward.”

There was however, in his own family-circle, a want which was keenly felt by Abraham. He had no child ; and he anticipated that Eliezer, the steward

of his house, would consequently become his adopted heir. God condescends therefore on this occasion to renew to him the promise, making it yet more express, that he shall have an heir of his own body. "He brought him forth abroad, and said, Look now toward heaven, and tell the stars if thou be able to number them: and he said unto him, So shall thy seed be."—The Lord gave him also very distinct prophetic views of the future condition of his descendants, even to far-distant periods of time.

It is on this occasion that the sacred writer introduces a verse which is frequently quoted in the New Testament; and which describes the fundamental principle of all true Religion; a principle equally of force both under the Old Testament and under the New. It is here recorded of Abraham, "He believed in the Lord: and he counted it to him for righteousness."—The subject is so important, that it requires a distinct and careful examination.

At present, we shall consider the fact asserted, that Abraham "believed in the Lord."

1. It will be useful, first of all, to inquire, "What is faith?"

Perhaps the best general explanation of Faith, is this, "Taking a person at his word." The greatest honour we can do to any one, is to put full and unhesitating confidence in his declarations. Nor can a grosser insult be offered, than to call any one a liar; or, (which is much the same thing,) to show plainly that we put no reliance whatever on his word. How great the malignity then of Unbelief:

"He that believeth not God hath made him a liar." On the other hand, genuine faith honours God: "He that hath received his testimony (*i.e.* Christ's testimony, who is God,) hath set to his seal, that God is true."

2. Looking then more particularly into the subject, we may remark that Abraham was favoured with many communications from the Lord: and all these he received with a believing heart. Sometimes he was addressed by God in visions; at other times, through the ministry of angels; and yet more graciously, by special appearances of the Son of God, who manifested himself in some visible form, and held sacred converse with this highly privileged man. Some may perhaps think, that under these circumstances Abraham could not possibly do otherwise than believe. Certainly he was under the strongest possible obligations to believe. Yet such is the perverseness of the human heart, that men are capable of resisting the clearest evidences of Religion. Of Abraham, however, it is expressly recorded that he *did* believe. "He believed in the Lord."

We must expand this idea in a few particulars.

— (1) He believed in the existence and presence of the Lord. And in this belief we are bound to imitate him. Without this faith, it is impossible to please God. We are to adore Him as the self-existent Jehovah, viewing ourselves as the creatures of His power. "In him we live and move and have our being." "Neither is there any creature that is not manifest in his sight: but all things are

naked and opened unto the eyes of him, with whom we have to do."

— (2) Abraham believed also in the authority of God's commandment. He knew the voice of the Lord, and bowed to it. Whatever God required him to do, Abraham did. He kept, and he persuaded others to keep, "the way of the Lord."

— (3) He believed also in the unfailing certainty of God's promises. At this particular time he believed that he (though his body were as good as dead,) should become "the father of many nations." He staggered not at the promise of God through unbelief." "Against hope he believed in hope." "He was strong in faith, giving glory to God."

— (4) He more especially believed the promise of a Redeemer, who was to come; and who was to descend, according to the flesh, from himself. This is the meaning of the declaration made to Abraham from the first, and often repeated, "In thee," and "in THY SEED, shall all the nations of the earth be blessed." So it is expounded by St. Paul, (Galatians iii. 16.) "Now to Abraham and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ."—Hence our Lord Jesus Christ, when on earth, plainly declared to the Jews, concerning their progenitor in whom they ignorantly boasted, "Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day: and he saw it, and was glad." He so fully believed in the coming Saviour of the world, that he might be almost said to have seen that Saviour actually and

already come. By faith he beheld our Gospel-day; and through his faith shared our Gospel-privileges.

And now, reflect on the consolations springing from such a faith as this. What an unspeakable happiness was it to Abraham, to have a Friend in whom he could confide! What greater comfort can there be to a weak, ignorant, and sinful creature, than to feel that he has a merciful Guide, able to carry him through every difficulty, and to support him in every danger? Such a Friend, Guide, and Supporter was revealed to Abraham: not once only, but frequently: not dimly, but clearly. It was the Lord, who thus made Himself known, as the self-existent, ever-living Jehovah; the faithful, the Almighty, the everlasting God: the shield of his servant, and his exceeding great reward. And Abraham "believed in the Lord!" He rested and strengthened himself in the Lord his God!



SECTION IX.

JUSTIFICATION, THE FREE REWARD OF FAITH.

And he believed in the Lord; and he counted it to him for righteousness. (*Genesis* xv. 6.)

It stands on record, both in the Old and New Testament, that Abraham's "faith was counted unto him for righteousness." On this very account is this holy man held up, as a pattern to the Church of God in all ages. Let us then carefully consider the subject of Justification on Scripture-grounds: and

may the Holy Spirit enlighten our hearts, to understand it aright! May the same faith be imparted to us, which shone so brightly in our father Abraham!

“He believed in the Lord, and it was counted unto him for righteousness:” that is—He, upon his believing, was accounted righteous before God. He “was accounted” righteous. It cannot be said, He “*was*” righteous: but, *he was accounted* such.

These two words are by no means to be separated, “Accounted;” and, “Righteous.” For Abraham was not in himself a righteous man. He was a sinner: he knew himself to be a sinner. Had he come before God, pleading his own righteousness, he would have been rejected. The same applies to every one of us: for “there is none righteous, no, not one. All have sinned: all have come short of the glory of God.” And therefore every soul of man must say, “Enter not into judgment with thy servant, O Lord; for in thy sight shall no man living be justified.”—Yet, imperfect and sinful as he was, Abraham, on his believing, was accounted righteous. That is to say, God accepted him into favour, and treated him as though he had been perfectly righteous.

Some highly important inquiries are connected with this doctrine. We will notice four.

1. First, *Why* did God so accept believing Abraham? and, (which is a similar question), Why does he accept and favour any sinner, on his believing? To this inquiry the Scriptures give us a simple and satisfactory answer: He does so, of his own free

mercy! This act of justifying, flows from the riches of his grace, in Christ Jesus. Christ merited for us, what we could never have obtained by our own merit. He, by his obedience unto death, even the death of the Cross, hath purchased for us a title to eternal life. By the disobedience of the first Adam, we were all "made sinners:" by the obedience of the second Adam, even of Christ Jesus, all believers in him are "made righteous:" that is, they are constituted or accounted righteous: (Romans v. 19.) Righteousness is imputed to them: and it is called, "the righteousness which is of God by faith." Believers therefore are declared to be "justified freely by his grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus: whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood:" (Rom. iii. 24, 25.)

2. But here a second important inquiry arises—How is this justification obtained "by *faith*," or "through faith?" Is it through faith, viewed as a meritorious work; or is it through faith in some other sense?

Here Scripture again helps us. Certainly not through faith considered as a work. "For if Abraham were justified by works, he hath whereof to glory." And if believers were saved by their faith, as a work, they would then glory in their faith. They would feel that they had something of their own, whereof to glory. This glorying, however, is not permitted "before God." No flesh may glory in his presence. We may not glory in those graces which the Spirit hath freely wrought in us. We

are bound to be thankful for them: but they are no merit of ours. Consequently we may not glory in our faith, which is one of those graces.

Justifying faith then must be viewed in a different light from merit: namely, as the instrument or means, whereby the soul *accepts* the gift of righteousness. Faith is as a hand, to apprehend and receive what Christ hath prepared. He hath wrought out for us a perfect righteousness: He himself is of God made unto us Righteousness: all we can do in the matter, is, to accept this righteousness: which is done simply by believing.

3. Another useful inquiry may arise, concerning the *Measure or Degree* of our faith. Had Abraham a large, or a limited measure of faith?—To this we reply—If you regard the *amount* of what was revealed to him, his faith was indeed small; for he did not see the Gospel, so fully and clearly as it is now revealed to us. But if we regard his faith as a *grace in exercise*, then it must be admitted that he had a faith pre-eminently strong. He had that faith, by which he would have cordially received more, had more been revealed to him. In what *was* revealed, his faith was large and abundant. He was “FULLY PERSUADED that what God had promised, he was able also to perform.” So then, his “faith was imputed to him for righteousness.”

There is a double use in our thus considering the degrees of faith. For first, we may be encouraged to hope that many are saved by faith, to whom only a little of God's will is revealed. And next, it

reminds us how strongly **WE** under the Gospel-dispensation are bound to believe. For unto us "the true light now shineth!" How complete is the doctrine, as stated by St. Paul: namely, that righteousness shall be imputed to us, "if we believe on him that raised up Jesus our Lord from the dead: Who was delivered for our offences, and was raised again for our justification." (Romans iv. 21—25.)

4. Again, it is important to notice the *Date* of Abraham's faith. When was faith imputed unto Abraham for righteousness? The answer is given, and great stress is laid upon it, in Scripture: "Not in circumcision, but in uncircumcision." St. Paul makes much of this distinction of times. And this he does for the encouragement of us Gentiles; in order to prove that it is faith in God and in Christ, and not the observance of outward ordinances, that is the means of our justification. Circumcision was to Abraham the sign and seal of the righteousness, which he had being yet uncircumcised: it was not the imputed righteousness itself: no: that comes from God in Christ! In like manner must our faith come from God and from the work of his Holy Spirit! Outward ordinances, (such as circumcision and the passover under the Law, and the Sacraments under the Gospel) are to be devoutly and faithfully used. But the great gift of salvation is solely of Christ's free grace, accepted by faith!

We add two very short reflections, of a general nature, on this subject.

First, how abundant is the **MERCY** of our God in

Christ, by which believers are received into favour and accounted righteous! "God, who is rich in mercy, for his great love wherewith he loved us, even when we were dead in sins, hath quickened us together with Christ, (by grace ye are saved;) and hath raised us up together, and made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus: that in the ages to come he might shew the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness toward us through Christ Jesus. For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: not of works, lest any man should boast." (Ephesians ii. 4—9.)

And then, how large is the FAMILY of believers, gathered from among the children of men, both under the Old and under the New Covenant! Abraham, not because he was the earliest believer, but because he was pre-eminent in faith, is called "the father of us all." (Romans iv. 16.) We have good reason to look up to St. Paul, as a man of great faith: but here we behold St. Paul himself looking up to Abraham, and feeling himself to be, comparatively, a child in faith! The truth is, in Christ we are all one! "Ye are all the children of God, through faith in Christ Jesus." On our common Redeemer then, as Abraham, and Paul, and Peter, and John depended, so let us depend! And to Him let us give all the glory of our salvation! Oh, may we be found constantly "looking unto Jesus, who is the Author and finisher of our faith!" Amen and Amen!

SECTION X.

ABRAHAM AND HAGAR—CHARACTERISTICS OF
ISHMAEL.

And the angel of the Lord found her by a fountain of water in the wilderness, by the fountain in the way to Shur.

And he said, Hagar, Sarai's maid, whence camest thou? and whither wilt thou go? And she said, I flee from the face of my mistress Sarai.

And the angel of the Lord said unto her, Return to thy mistress, and submit thyself under her hands.

And the angel of the Lord said unto her, I will multiply thy seed exceedingly, that it shall not be numbered for multitude.

And the angel of the Lord said unto her, Behold, thou art with child, and shalt bear a son, and shalt call his name Ishmael; because the Lord hath heard thy affliction.

And he will be a wild man; his hand will be against every man, and every man's hand against him; and he shall dwell in the presence of all his brethren.

And she called the name of the Lord that spake unto her, Thou God seest me: for she said, Have I also here looked after him that seeth me?

Wherefore the well was called Beer-lahai-roi; behold, it is between Kadesh and Bered.

And Hagar bare Abram a son: and Abram called his son's name, which Hagar bare, Ishmael. (*Genesis* xvi. 7—15.)

THE character of Abraham would be very imperfectly reviewed, if we overlooked the faulty parts of it, which are plainly stated in Scripture. One of his errors, was the ill-advised connection which he formed with Hagar, the servant of Sarah; an Egyptian and a bond-woman. This connection he formed at the suggestion of Sarah herself. Their error (for both were to blame) sprang from their impatience; and that impatience from unbelief. Sarah

was barren, and Abraham therefore was childless. Instead of continuing to wait for God's promised blessing, they took crooked ways of their own devising, in order to obtain a posterity to Abraham. It is no uncommon thing for even good men to attempt to lead, instead of following, Providence.

Many evils arose from this step. The first, and most natural consequence was, that the peace of Abraham's house was for a while grievously disturbed. A son was at length born to him by Hagar; and hence followed another, though a remoter consequence, of an evil character: for the descendants of that son have ever since been the troublers of mankind, in all the countries where they dwell. Each of these two points will suggest to our minds some useful hints.—The allegorical use made of the history by St. Paul may more properly be considered in another place, when we come to review the character of Isaac.

1. First, let us observe the disturbance immediately occasioned in Abraham's own family.

Hagar, as soon as she had the prospect of bearing a child to Abraham, began to hold her head higher, and to behave herself insolently toward her mistress. She exemplified what Solomon has described as among the most intolerable evils in society: "For three things the earth is disquieted, and for four which it cannot bear: for a servant when he reigneth; and a fool when he is filled with meat; for an odious woman when she is married; and an hand-maid that is heir to her mistress." (Proverbs xxx.

21—23.) Sarah vented her bitter complaints to Abraham: and he, to rid himself of the difficulty, left Sarah to manage Hagar as she pleased. In consequence, Sarah dealt with her so hardly, that she fled, and went into the wilderness. Here the Lord interposed to settle this tiresome domestic strife: "The angel of the Lord (we read) found her by a fountain of water in the wilderness, by the fountain in the way to Shur. And he said, Hagar, Sarai's maid, whence camest thou? and whither wilt thou go? And she said, I flee from the face of my mistress Sarai. And the angel of the Lord said unto her, Return to thy mistress, and submit thyself under her hands." (Genesis xvi. 7—9.) Submission is generally found to be the best rule. "Yielding pacifieth great offences."—Thus the family-trouble was, for a while, partially healed.

There is one very remarkable incident related by the sacred writer at this part of the history; which shows that some degree of religious knowledge and principle must have been instilled into the mind of Hagar; most probably by the example and counsels of Abraham. When He, who is called "the Angel," had addressed her, she perceived that it was the Lord, Jehovah, who had spoken: and, with a devoutness truly commendable, she called his Name, "THOU GOD SEEST ME." And the fountain where she lay, (as it were, bewildered and lost,) was henceforward named, "Beer-lahai-roi:" which means, "The well of Him that liveth and seeth me." How instructive are these unexpected incidents,

occurring in the sacred narrative! Here we find a person, who had once probably been no better than a heathen, using language descriptive of two of the Divine Attributes, and addressing words of holy adoration to the Ever-living and All-seeing God: the God of her master Abraham! To what remarkable knowledge had she attained! What an unspeakable blessing is it, to belong to a religious household!

2. But there was another evil consequence of Abraham's conduct; and it is one which has affected the human race ever since, very extensively. Abraham thus became the parent of a son, named Ishmael; whose descendants have been a vexation to all who have had any kind of transactions with them; in fact, to all that have been neighbours to them. We cannot here enter minutely into the particulars of their history, which would easily fill volumes: but we may profitably study the prophecy which was on this occasion uttered to Hagar by the Angel; as the very terms, in which Ishmael and his posterity are described, will afford us some useful lessons. They teach, however, by the rule of contraries; showing us in Ishmael's character what to avoid, not what to imitate.

"He will be a wild man." Or, as the original signifies, "A wild-ass man:" that is, as wilful and obstinate, as the wild ass of the desert: utterly untamed and untameable.

"His hand will be against every man, and every man's hand against him: and he shall dwell in the presence of all his brethren." That is, he will be a

quarrelsome and provoking character to all his neighbours. And there will be no getting rid of him. He will hover about, and often lodge among the people of other tribes and nations; yet always as an enemy, that cannot be brought to terms. This has been remarkably the case with the wandering Arabs, the children of the desert. They are to be found, scattered more or less in all the countries of the East. They never settle long in one place: their resort to towns and cities is only occasional or accidental: their home is the wilderness.

There is a moral in the history of the Arabs which is applicable to us all. For it is impossible to read this prophecy, without feeling, that it not only describes the peculiar character of one large portion of mankind; but it depicts, to a certain degree, human nature in general. "Vain man would be wise," says Job, "though man be born as a wild ass's colt:" (xi. 12.) There is in every man's heart, until he is changed by grace, enough of the Arab, enough of self-will, obstinacy, and folly, to liken him to the wild ass of the desert. Look at the case of children that are ill-trained: what wayward humours, what domineering, unkind dispositions do they soon display! That one temper, commonly called, "The spirit of contradiction," what a torment is it, both to the person who has it, and to all connected with him! In contemplating such cases—and they are, alas, too common—you discern at once the heart, the hand, and the tongue of Ishmael.

The descendants of this wild man have never yet

been subdued.—“And will they *never* be tamed?” is the question that naturally springs up in our minds. Happily we are assured, by prophecy, that the benign power of the Gospel will, one day, change even them. This we gather from the language of Psalm lxxii., in which the all-victorious reign of Jesus is predicted. At the ninth verse we read, “They that dwell in the wilderness shall bow before him.” Yes: the fierce and crafty child of the desert shall assuredly come and sit at the feet of Jesus; and, learning from Him, shall become a new creature, being renewed in the spirit of his mind!—To this same Divine Teacher let us come likewise, for grace to enable us to subdue and correct our evil dispositions. For when Christ by his Spirit works mightily upon the heart, the most contentious, bigotted, and unruly persons are transformed into gentle, reasonable, and friendly beings: they even become brethren in Christ, and they love as brethren. Oh, what surprising changes are wrought in sinful hearts, by the almighty influence of grace!

SECTION XI.

ABRAHAM OFFERING UP HIS SON ISAAC.

And Abraham stretched forth his hand, and took the knife to slay his son.

And the angel of the Lord called unto him out of heaven, and said, Abraham, Abraham: and he said, Here am I.

And he said, Lay not thine hand upon the lad, neither do thou any thing unto him: for now I know that thou fearest God, seeing thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son from me.

And Abraham lifted up his eyes, and looked, and behold behind him a ram caught in a thicket by his horns : and Abraham went and took the ram, and offered him up for a burnt-offering in the stead of his son.

And Abraham called the name of that place Jehovah-jireh : as it is said to this day, In the mount of the Lord it shall be seen.

(*Genesis* xxii. 10—14.)

THE distinguishing grace of Abraham, namely his faith, was eminent in its quality and degree, and had often been proved to be so. Yet it seemed good to the Lord that this grace in his servant should be tried to the uttermost, in order that mankind might in all ages be convinced of the influence of this principle in promoting unreserved obedience to the will of God. It came to pass, therefore, “after these things”—(that is, after Abraham had already done and suffered much as a servant of the Lord)—“after these things God did tempt Abraham :” that is, he tried him. He brought upon him the hardest trial last. The highest degrees of grace, usually, are not attained or perfected, or suitably displayed for God’s glory, without a large measure of trial and affliction.

From the narrative given by the sacred writer, we have the opportunity of observing the following three points:—The command of the Lord; the obedience of Abraham; and the gracious reward, which followed on his obedience.

1. First, consider the Command laid upon him.

It was the most surprising, the most unexpected command that possibly could be. Nothing less than Abraham’s knowledge of the voice of Jehovah

could have made him believe that such a command was from God. Every part of the direction given him was painfully touching. Weigh well each clause of such an injunction as the following—
 “Take now thy son, thine only son Isaac, whom thou lovest, and get thee into the land of Moriah; and offer him there for a burnt-offering upon one of the mountains that I will tell thee of.”

“Thy son:”—the fruit of thy body; one specially given to thee and Sarah: another self: honoured as thy representative, successor, and heir: the image and likeness of his believing father.

“Thine only son Isaac”—for Ishmael was estranged, cast out, and not to be regarded as a son, under that special covenant which God had made with Abraham. There was no one among Abraham’s descendants like Isaac, or equal to him; the child of promise; the peculiar gift of God.

“Whom thou lovest”—the desire of thine eyes, the treasure of thy heart. Besides the affection of nature, there would be in Abraham’s bosom an affection springing from the conviction that Isaac was a pious youth: so that he was doubly dear to his father; yea, a thousand times more dear, than if he had merely been the fond object of a natural instinct. He was “beloved in the Lord!”

Go with him—to an unknown spot, which shall be pointed out to thee. Follow that same Providence and that same Spirit, which led thee from Haran to Canaan. Trust my guidance!

And there “offer him for a burnt-offering.”—

Abraham was wont to offer sacrifices. He understood God's appointed method of worship: but such an offering as this never had, and never could have entered into his thoughts before.

2. Now observe his Obedience.

He rises early in the morning. Why so early? To be beforehand with his private devotions. To escape Sarah's notice: for there was no call to wound her feelings: it was *his* faith, not *hers*, that was to be tried: she might have embarrassed, and scarcely could have helped him: it was a matter between God and his own soul. Not even to Isaac was his purpose as yet made known.

The customary preparations are made for their departure on this sacred journey. The ass is saddled: two trusty young men are taken with him: the wood is got ready: and Isaac, unsuspecting Isaac, is called to accompany him.

Three days they travel on: Abraham alone carrying in his breast the dreadful secret, the mysterious design of the journey.

Then, lifting up his eyes, he sees the place afar off. Some divine token pointed it out to him: and he is now constrained to ponder the whole transaction before him, with deeper and closer thoughts.

He dismisses his attendants, and takes Isaac with him alone. He tells them—(and it proved true)—“I and the lad will go yonder and worship, and come again to you.” Wonderful faith! that he should venture to anticipate the return of Isaac alive and safe! He takes the wood, the fire,

and the knife: the wood being bound on Isaac his son!

And now, if any thing could have unnerved the faith of Abraham, it had been the touching and artless question of Isaac: "My father—behold the fire and the wood; but where is the lamb for a burnt-offering?" The steadfast, believing mind of Abraham supplies a ready and prudent answer: "My son, God will provide himself a lamb for a burnt-offering." So they went both of them together.

In vain should we attempt to imagine the feelings excited in both of them, at what must have appeared their last parting scene. "They came to the place which God had told him of; and Abraham built an altar there, and laid the wood in order, and bound Isaac his son, and laid him on the altar upon the wood. And Abraham stretched forth his hand, and took the knife to slay his son." (Genesis xxii. 9, 10.) Isaac submits: a dutiful son to a holy father: submitting, in truth, rather to God than to his father Abraham. He resigns himself, without a struggle or a murmur. Both exercise equal faith: both suffer inexpressible anguish, but in the calm spirit of martyrs!

Now, on what principle did Abraham thus obey? Let St. Paul answer the question—On the principle of faith! (See Hebrews xi. 17—19.) "By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered up Isaac: and he that had received the promises offered up his only begotten son, of whom it was said, That in Isaac shall thy seed be called: accounting that

God was able to raise him up, even from the dead; from whence also he received him in a figure." He believed that Isaac would not be lost to him. He believed that none of the promises of God would fail.

3. Then follows the gracious Reward.

An Angel from heaven arrests the hand of Abraham; and Isaac, as good as sacrificed, and yet spared, is restored to the arms of his father.

At the same moment the promises of the covenant are renewed to Abraham.

And—(which would be no small consolation)—his character is expressly approved of God, saying, "Because thou hast not withheld thy son, thine only son from me:" "because thou hast obeyed my voice." These are lofty terms of approbation, ratifying and confirming the commendations given at former times to Abraham. They are like that sentence, "Well done, good and faithful servant!"

On this part of the patriarch's history, two remarks may be grounded.

First, we should be led to inquire—What degree of faith do *we* manifest, when God tries us?—The trial most nearly resembling this of Abraham's, is, when the Lord removes by death any of our most tenderly beloved relatives; a husband or a wife, a son or a daughter. How do we bear the stroke? Are we resigned and patient, silent and submissive? Do we say from the heart—"It is the Lord: let him do what seemeth him good!" "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away: blessed be

the name of the Lord!" Too often, alas! we murmur and rebel: and thus we show the weakness of our faith. Oh then, let us pray for more of this holy principle. Let us study the example of Abraham, that we may copy it. Let us freely say, "Lord, take, if it please thee, this treasure, which is more thine than mine. Only fill my heart with Thy Blessed Spirit, assuring me of thy wisdom, faithfulness, and love! What thou removest is a thing of Time: what thou givest, is for Eternity!"

Next, and above all, this narrative should bring to our recollection, how dear and precious a pledge God hath given us, of his willingness to bless us far beyond what we are able to ask or think. Was Abraham a father? So is God: He is our heavenly Father: and he is the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ. Did Abraham prepare himself to offer a most precious sacrifice, the sacrifice of his son Isaac? God hath done more: He hath actually given his only-begotten and well-beloved Son, to die for the redemption of our souls. How sure then are all the promises of the everlasting covenant! How fully and unreservedly may their accomplishment be looked for by every believer! "He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?"

SECTION XII.

DEATH OF SARAH, AND OF ABRAHAM.

And Sarah was an hundred and seven and twenty years old: these were the years of the life of Sarah.

And Sarah died in Kirjath-arba; the same is Hebron in the land of Canaan: and Abraham came to mourn for Sarah, and to weep for her.

And Abraham stood up from before his dead, and spake unto the sons of Heth, saying,

I am a stranger and a sojourner with you: give me a possession of a buryingplace with you, that I may bury my dead out of my sight.

And the children of Heth answered Abraham, saying unto him,

Hear us, my lord: thou art a mighty prince among us: in the choice of our sepulchres bury thy dead; none of us shall withhold from thee his sepulchre, but that thou mayest bury thy dead.

And Abraham stood up, and bowed himself to the people of the land, even to the children of Heth.

(*Genesis* xxiii. 1—7.)

THUS far our attention has been engaged by the character of Abraham: that of his wife, however, is well worthy of particular study, especially as she is mentioned with high commendation in several parts of the New Testament.

1. The Faulty parts of the character of Sarah shall first be noticed.—She twice concurred with her husband, in the deceit of passing herself off as his sister. She acted also very unwisely in counselling Abraham to take Hagar to wife; and on this occasion exhibited very harsh and unreasonable tempers toward Hagar herself. On another occasion, by denying that she had laughed, she drew

down upon herself the severe rebuke of the Lord ; "Nay, but thou didst laugh." From these various instances we perceive that natural corruption is busily at work, even in the most excellent of characters. Unbelief, impatience, and guile are among the most common evils of human nature. Who can say that he is entirely free from them !

It is but equitable, however, to take into account the trying circumstances in which Sarah was frequently placed : not that these form any excuse for her conduct ; but they partly account for it. And this view of her trials may serve to put us the more earnestly upon our guard ; that we, when tempted, may not fall into similar transgressions.

2. But inquiring, on the other hand, what were the Virtues that adorned Sarah's character, we shall discover three points, in respect of which she is peculiarly worthy of praise.

First, we view in her the submissive and dutiful wife of the venerable patriarch Abraham. For this characteristic she is particularly commended by the apostle Peter, who was himself a married man ; a good judge and an inspired counsellor on the subject of female excellence. St. Peter was laying down instructions for wives, teaching them to be deferential toward their own husbands ; to be modest, meek, and gentle ; thus adorning and recommending their Christian profession, by the virtues peculiarly suited to their relation in life. These precepts he enforces by the particular example of Sarah ; "For after this manner in the old time the

holy women also, who trusted in God, adorned themselves, being in subjection unto their own husbands: even as Sara obeyed Abraham, calling him lord: whose daughters ye are, as long as ye do well, and are not afraid with any amazement." (1 Peter iii. 5, 6.)—It is very instructive to observe how the Holy Spirit directed this Apostle to select a single word, which dropped incidentally from Sarah's lips, "My lord being old also;" illustrating from that term, "lord," the habitual submissiveness and respectfulness of this holy woman.—The real habit of the mind often discovers itself by little things. A word too many, or a word out of place, may sometimes indicate want of regularity in the government of our thoughts; while a good and amiable disposition frequently beams forth in a single, passing remark. Let females learn from Sarah to regulate the heart on holy principles: they will then have no need of studied phrases or glittering ornaments.

Another excellence in Sarah's character, was her watchful maternal care over her son Isaac. In his tender youth, she protected him from the profane association of his brother Ishmael. The fuller notice of this will more properly occur, when Isaac's character shall come under consideration.

But the chief grace to be noticed in Sarah, is, her Faith. This was the root of all her other excellences. For this she is emphatically and highly commended in the New Testament. St. Paul in his Epistle to the Hebrews extols Abraham and Sarah, together, as being both eminent for their faith.

The former, on this account, was named, "The father of many nations;" while Sarah, at the same time, received from the Lord the title of "Princess." Although not without her faults, yet is she to be honoured as the affectionate, dutiful, long-tried, and faithful wife, helper, and fellow-pilgrim of the venerable Abraham. She saw Isaac attain the age of seven and thirty years, and then died; leaving Abraham in God's appointed time to follow her. That time, as it proved, was not less than another thirty-seven years.

3. The account of Sarah's burial brings before us one of the most touching scenes imaginable. How affecting to think, that they who have long lived together in comfort and usefulness, must inevitably be separated by death! Then the survivor beholds an object, once to him the most lovely upon earth, quickly becoming a prey to corruption: and he is constrained to say, "Let me bury my dead out of my sight." Yet, as we commit the remains of a pious friend or relative to the tomb, the word of God comforts us with the hope of seeing that very dust re-animated. "This corruptible shall put on incorruption, and this mortal shall put on immortality!"

The sympathy shown on this occasion towards Abraham by the children of Heth quite moves us to love them. Heathens they probably were; yet they were impressed with the tenderest feelings of humanity, and with a profound veneration for the patriarch Abraham.—And here it is particularly worthy of remark, that although God had promised

all that land to Abraham and his posterity, yet Abraham himself on this occasion claimed no part of it as his own property. He contentedly buys the field of Ephron, for the sum of four hundred shekels of silver, current money with the merchant. This transaction showed the patient character of his faith. By a divine right the whole country belonged to him and his heirs: but he knew that they must wait God's time and method of giving them actual possession of the land.

4. After this, Abraham's first care was to see his son Isaac united in marriage to a partner worthy of their chosen race. He himself also married again, and reared another family. Since, however, Isaac was the son according to promise, Abraham during his lifetime sent these other children, with suitable portions, far away into the east-country. Thus jealousies and strifes would be avoided; and thus also the prophecy would be accomplished, "I will make thy name great;" since probably no name is better known in Eastern countries to this day, than the name of Abraham.

The patriarch himself at length closed his long life of faith, at the age of an hundred and seventy-five years; and was buried by his sons, Isaac and Ishmael, in the cave of Machpelah.

PRAYERS,

RELATIVE TO SOME OF THE PRECEDING SUBJECTS.

FOR THE PARDON OF SIN.

O ALMIGHTY God, who of thy tender love towards mankind didst give thine only Son, to die that we might live: Hear the prayer of thy servants, who draw near to thy mercy-seat, trusting wholly in the merits of Christ, our Lord and Saviour. For his sake, pardon all our past transgressions. Renew our sinful nature by thy Holy Spirit. Receive us, unworthy as we are, into thy favour: and grant us a place among thy pardoned and accepted children.

O our God, when we look at the number and heinousness of our iniquities, we have cause to abase ourselves in the dust before thee, with the deepest humility. Yet suffer us not at any time to despair of finding mercy. Cast us not away in thy displeasure, though we deserve it. Remember not the sins of our youth, nor our transgressions: according to thy mercy remember thou us, for thy goodness' sake, O Lord.

Hear us, for the glory of thy Name, and be gracious unto us, through Jesus Christ our Saviour. Amen.

FOR FAITH AND HOLINESS.

O LORD, who hast revealed thyself, as a God merciful and gracious, pardoning iniquity, transgression and sin, through Jesus Christ thy well-beloved Son: Enable us daily to approach thee in faith, pleading his name, and seeking salvation through him alone. Lord, we have no other hope. To whom should we go, but to the Lamb of God, slain to take away the sins of the world!

O may the remembrance of our Redeemer's sufferings fill us with shame on account of our sins: and may we utterly abhor and forsake every evil way. Let us not provoke thee to anger, by continuing in the practice of what we know to be sinful and displeasing to thee. Stir up within us a fervent desire to keep thy commandments, and to glorify thee before all men. And may the Holy Ghost, the Sanctifier and Comforter of thy people, work in us continually both to will and to do of thy good pleasure. Yea, the very God of peace sanctify us wholly: and may our whole spirit, and soul, and body, be preserved blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

We ask these great mercies, for the sake of the same Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.



FOR HEAVENLY WISDOM.

O LORD, our heavenly Father, who hast promised to give thy Holy Spirit to them that ask thee:

Look down in mercy upon us thy unworthy children ; have compassion upon our ignorance, and shed abroad the light of thy Truth in our minds. With shame we acknowledge that we have frequently wandered, not only through the blindness, but also through the deceitfulness and desperate wickedness of our corrupt hearts. O let not sin prevail, so as to cloud our souls with darkness and error. But grant to us, that, having a single eye to thy glory, we may be filled with light ; and may know in all things what is the good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God.

Enable us to walk in wisdom toward them that fear Thee not, and especially toward those who resist thy Gospel. O have pity upon them : and vouchsafe to us in all our conversation with them, both the wisdom of the serpent and the harmlessness of the dove ; that we may remove their prejudices, and win them to Christ. May the word of God not be evil spoken of on our account, but may we have grace to adorn the Gospel of God our Saviour in all things. Keep us ever on our guard, against all the assaults and devices of our cruel enemy. Deliver us from every temptation ; defend us from all evil ; and comfort us with thy presence. And suffer us not, at any time, to be betrayed, by our own unruly wills and affections, into sin : but keeping our hearts with all diligence, may we so walk by the light of thy word, and the teaching of thy Spirit, that we may at length attain to the light of everlasting life, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

FOR GRACE TO LIVE THE LIFE OF FAITH.

O God, thou hast given unto us exceeding great and precious promises, that by them we might be partakers of the divine nature. Yea, thou hast given thine own Son for us all, that in Him we might freely have all things. And thou promisest the gift of the Holy Spirit to them that ask it. Thou guidest thy believing people here on earth with thy counsel, and afterwards receivest them to glory. What shall we render to thee for all thy benefits, O Lord our God! We present unto Thee our humble thanks for them: and we pray that we may have grace to honour Thee and thy faithfulness, by accepting what is so abundantly offered in thy Gospel. Enable us by faith to set to our seal, that God is true.

Lord, we desire not only to believe thy word, but also to live under the constant influence of it. Grant us such discoveries of thy mercy, as may preserve us from being overwhelmed by the sight of our own vileness. May we thus walk before thee in the deepest humility, yet with lively joy. Enable us to mortify all sin; to deny self, and daily to take up our cross; to renounce the world, and reprove the evil that is in it; to be of one heart with all who love our Lord Jesus Christ, and to be patient towards all men.

And as we continually draw nearer and nearer to our latter end, Lord, help us to live more and more as pilgrims and strangers on the earth. Building up

ourselves on our most holy faith, and praying in the Holy Ghost, may we keep ourselves in the love of God; looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life.

All which we humbly ask in the name, and for the sake of Him who loved us, and hath redeemed us unto God with his blood, even Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.



FOR THE BLESSING OF PEACE.

ALMIGHTY and most merciful Father, who hast reconciled us, sinners, unto Thyself, through the death of thy Son: Grant, we beseech thee, that we being justified by faith may have peace with thee through our Lord Jesus Christ. Enable us so to follow the leadings of thy good Spirit, that we may abound in love and joy and peace; and may have always a conscience void of offence toward God and toward men. Keep us from disquieting ourselves in vain. Let us be content with such things as we have, hoping for a better inheritance above. And having safely passed the waves of this troublesome world, receive us at length into the haven of everlasting rest, through Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.

May the peace of God, which passeth all understanding, keep our hearts and minds through Christ Jesus!

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